

1706
D E A T H
A N D *S Blackwell.*
H E A V E N; ¹⁸¹⁹

O R

The Last Enemy Conquer'd,

A N D

Separate Spirits made perfect;

With an ACCOUNT of

The Rich VARIETY of their *Em-*
ployments and Pleasures;

Attempted in TWO

FUNERAL DISCOURSES,

In MEMORY of

Sir JOHN HARTOPP, Bart.
and his LADY, deceased.

By I. WATTS, D. D. *K*

The FOURTH EDITION,

With the PREFACE to the *German* Translation.

1 Pet. iii. 7. *Heirs together of the Grace of Life.*

D U B L I N:

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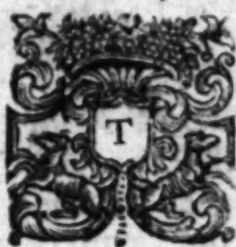
Robert Clarke esq; Lib



T O

Sir John Hartopp Bart

S I R,



O Descend from such Parents as yours, is no common Favour of Heaven; nor is it the Blessing of every Descendant to inherit the natural Virtues of his Progenitors: yet I know that you esteem your Happiness incompleat, without the Imitation of their Heavenly Graces, and the Attainment of their sublimest Hopes.

Forgive me, *Dear Sir*, if I take the liberty to say, 'tis with a sort of fond Pleasure that I have beheld your Victories over the most dangerous Scenes and Temptations of Youth; and every Step in your Progress towards perfect Triumph, is an Addition to my Joy. The World and the Church hold their Eyes fixed upon you, while God and Angels, and (perhaps) the Souls of your sacred Ancestors, look down from on high to

observe your Conduct. Never was there a more proper Time to awaken your Zeal for the Religion of *Christ*, than in a Day of spreading Infidelity and Heathenism; nor can there be a fitter Season to exert your utmost Efforts for the Support of serious Piety, than in an Age of numerous and growing Iniquities. Your just Sense of Religious Liberty will shine in its fairest Glory, while you stand as a Barrier against the fearful Inroads of a wild and unbounded Licentiousness. Nor can your Attachment to the Cause and Interest of the *Protestant Dissenters* appear with more Honour, than while they are defamed and scorned by the Proud and the Profane, and while their own imprudent Contests stand in need of your Candour and Charity.

Many are the Advantages you enjoy for this Purpose. Divine Providence has placed your Circumstances above the Bribery of a flattering World, and a corrupt Generation. Your superior Sense has no need to stand in awe of *Fools*, who make a Mock of Sin and Godliness. Let your native Modesty and Gentleness then arm itself with an unshaken Courage in the Cause of God; and fear not the malicious Scoff and Censure of Sinners, since you have nothing to expect or hope from them.

Go on, *Sir*, and prosper in the things of Heaven, and become an Example of shining Holiness in a degenerate World. Let the *Libertines* of the Nation know, that you also dare to think freely for yourself, and with all that Freedom of Thought you dare to chuse the Paths of your holy Ancestors.

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The DEDICATION.

The peculiar Favour of God has provided you a *Consort*, whose natural and pious Accomplishments and Assistances will attend you thro' all the Way. These will soften the seeming Severities of strict Religion with the tenderest Endearments of Life, and make the Pleasures of it double and transcendent. The Name, the Title and the Character of your Excellent *Father* deceased, require and demand an eminent degree of Goodness in his Successor. The Pious *Lady* your *Mother* (now in Heaven) would have rejoiced in the present Prospect, and would have purchased your Felicity even with her own Life: and your numerous *Relatives* around you suspend their Happiness upon yours. The Piety you have shewn towards your Worthy *Parents* from your Infancy, and the affectionate Honours which you now pay their Memory, give me further Assurance that this is your Aim, and your glorious Ambition. And that you may ever keep in mind their Example and your Duty, you have commanded me to make publick these Discourses, which were framed on the Occasion of their Decease.

You well know, *Sir*, I'm no Friend to loose Panegyrick, nor am I wont to bestow it on the Dead or the Living. What I have written of the late *Sir John Hartopp* at the end of the second Discourse, is the first Attempt that ever I made of concluding a Funeral Sermon with a distinct and particular Character of the Deceased, thro' the whole space of twenty three Years of my Ministry; and surely the World will not envy nor detract from the just Honours of a Name so much belov'd. As for the *Lady* your *Mother*, she affected Retirement to such a degree, that it would have placed her in a wrong Light to have

drawn out her Virtues at length, and set them to publick View. I have therefore only interspers'd a few Hints of her eminent Piety, as the Text and Arguments led me into 'em: And indeed this is the utmost that I have ever done before on such Occasions.

I have much Reason to ask pardon that I have so far enlarged these Discourses, and especially the last; for I hate the Thoughts of making any thing in Religion heavy or tiresome. But having entertain'd myself many a time with some of these Meditations on *the Business and the Blessedness of Separate Spirits*, I took this Opportunity of showing them to the World, enshrined in the Lustre of two such Names as adorn my Title-Page.

To render the reading of them yet more agreeable to yourself and to all your Friends, I have cast them into distinct *Sections*, that my Readers may leave off almost where they please, and peruse so much of them at one time as suits their present Inclination and Convenience.

You know, Sir, I pretend to no Authority to pronounce effectual Blessings upon you; but you will accept the good Wishes of a Man that loves you, and is zealous for your Felicity in the upper and lower Worlds. May the best of Mercies descend daily on yourself, your Lady, and your little Offspring! May the Closet, the Parlour, and publick Assemblies be constant Witnesses of your Piety? and the House where a Sir JOHN HARTOPP dwells, be a House of Prayer and of Praise in every Generation, nor the Name be extinguish'd in your Family till the Heavens be no more! May the Ladies your Sisters live happily under the sweet Influence of that mutual Affection that
has

has been always remarkably cultivated amongst you! Their Interests are your Care: And I am well persuaded that their Sollicitude and tender Concern for your Welfare will ever deserve and find such Returns of Love, as I have long observed with Delight! May the Prayers of your Progenitors in past Ages be answered in hourly Benefits descending on you all, and be fruitful of Blessings in Ages, yet to come! Such a lovely Scene, with such a long and joyful Prospect, will advance the Satisfaction of my Life, and give Pleasure even in a dying Hour, to him who had once the Honour to be your affectionate Monitor, and must ever write himself,

S I R,

Your Obliged,

Humble Servant,

July 6th,
1722..

I. Watts.



The P R E F A C E to this Book
of *Death and Heaven,*

When it was translated into the German
Language, and publish'd at *Halle* in
Saxony, 1727.

To the R E A D E R.

HERE is communicated to you a *Treatise*, in which the late pious Mr. Frank, Professor of Divinity at *Halle*, found so much Edification and Satisfaction, that he engaged an able Person to translate it into our German Tongue, to make others partake of the same Spiritual Benefit. This *Treatise* consists of Two Funeral Sermons, which an English Divine, who perhaps is still living, composed on the Death of Two eminent Persons, which he enlarged afterwards for their Publication. The Subject of the first is Death, taken from 1 Cor. xv. 26. The Second is Heaven, from Heb. xii. 22. From this last he takes an Occasion of flying with his Thoughts into the blessed Mansions of the Just made perfect, by giving us not only a very probable and beautiful Idea of the Glory of a future Life in general, but also an Enumeration of the many Sorts of Employments and Pleasures, that are to be met with there.

After

After the several false Notions, People of different Complexions have of eternal Life, are laid open, the Author of the Preface goes on and quotes some German Authors, who have writ upon that Subject, and says at last: *I hope no body will presume to aver this Doctrine to have been so far exhausted by those Authors, that nothing new could be said upon it. For several learned Writers in England, who in meditating and searching after hidden Truths have shewn an extraordinary Capacity, prove the contrary; and among others there is the Treatise, called, The future State, publish'd 1683, by a Gentleman whose Name is concealed, which appeared in French 1700, and is now printed in German with a Preface of the famous Dr. Präsius, senr. at Frankfurt ad Moenum. There is among Sir R. Blackmoor's Essays one upon the Future Beatitudes. The Traces of these two English Gentlemen are followed by our present English Divine I. Watts, who however in many Points has outdone these his Predecessors, and advanced a Step further in his Contemplations.*

Tho' the first Sermon contains many elegant Passages worthy to be read, yet the latter seems to be a more elaborate Piece, because it sets the Doctrine of eternal Life in a greater Light, and enriches it with many probable Inferences drawn from the Word of God. He proposes his excellent Thoughts in most emphatical Terms, in that beautiful Order, and with such a Vivacity of Style, that he keeps the Reader in a continual Attention and an eager Desire to read on. 'Tis plain the Author's Mind was so taken up with the Beauty of Heaven, that his Mouth could not but speak from the Abundance of his Heart. There is a secret Unction in his Expressions, which leaves a sweet Savour in the

Reader's Heart, and raises in him a Desire after the blessed Society he speaks of. And tho' the Reader should not entirely agree with the Author's Notions, yet he will not peruse this Treatise without a particular Edification and Blessing. I cannot deny but the Author's Conjectures may be sometimes carried a little too far, but that doth not prejudice the Subject in the least. Besides, he is generally so happy as to find some Arguments for his probable Notions in the Word of God, and to answer very dextrously all the Objections, that can be made against him.

May the ever-living God give a Blessing to this Work, and grant that those sweet and relishing Truths proposed in these Leaves may make such an Impression upon the Minds of the Readers as those noble Truths deserve. May he prevent all the Abuse of this delightful Subject, and never permit it to be turned into a mere dry or fruitless Speculation; but may he inflame every Reader with a holy Desire after a blessed Eternity, and rouse and excite all those, that have not begun yet to tread the Path of Salvation, to enter into the same without Delay, that they may not rest in a mere delightful Prospect of the Land of Canaan, nor be for ever excluded by their Unbelief from the eternal Enjoyment of it. Given at Halle, July 10, 1727.

*John Jacob Rambach,
S. Theol. Prof. Ordinar.*

Robert Clarke
his Book



THE
Conquest *over* DEATH.

Described in a
FUNERAL DISCOURSE in Memory of the
Lady *HARTOPP*, deceased.

The INTRODUCTION.



PERSUADE myself that none of you are unacquainted with that mournful Providence that calls me to the Service of this Day *. The Words which were borrowed from the Lips of the Dying, I am desired to improve for the Instruction and Comfort of those that Live. They are written in

* Nov. 9th, 1711, the Lady *Hartopp* died, and this Discourse was deliver'd at *Stoke-Newington*, Nov. 25. following.

I Ep. Cor. XV. 26.

The last Enemy that shall be destroyed, is Death.

WHEN a Nation has lain for whole Ages under the Power of some *mighty Tyrant*, and has suffered perpetual Ravages from his hands, what Gladness runs thro' the Land, at the sure Prediction of his Ruin? and how is every Inhabitant pleas'd, while he hears of the approaching Down-fal of his *great Enemy*? "For this is he that has slain my Father or my Mother, my Children, or my dearest Relatives, and is still making havoc of the Remnant of my Friends, while I myself stand in hourly Danger." This Pleasure grows up into more perfect Joy, when we are assured this is the *last Tyrant* that shall arise, the *last Enemy* that shall afflict us; for he shall have no Successor, and we shall be for ever free. Such should be the Rejoicing of all the Saints, when they hear so desirable and divine a Promise as the Words of my Text; *The last Enemy that shall be destroyed, is Death.*

To improve this glorious Proposition, let us consider these Four Things, with a Reflection on two upon each of them.

Sect. i. *The Conquest over Death.*

13

I. How *Death* appears to be an *Enemy* to the *Saints*.

II. Why it is called *The last Enemy*, or *the last that shall be destroyed*.

III. How it is to be *destroyed*, and what are the *Steps* or *gradual Efforts* towards its *Destruction*.

IV. What are the *Advantages* that the *Saints* receive by the *Destruction* of this *last Enemy*.

S E C T. I.

Death an Enemy even to Good Men.

THE first Enquiry is, *How, or in what sense Death appears to be an Enemy to the Saints.*

That 'tis in general an *Enemy* to *Human Nature*, is sufficiently evident from its first Introduction into the World; for it was brought in as an *Execution* of the first *Threatning* given to *Adam* in *Paradise*, *Gen. ii. 17. In the Day thou eatest thou shalt die.* It came in as a *Punishment* for *Sin*, and every *Punishment* in some respect opposes our *Interest*, and our *Happiness*. When it seiz'd on *Man* at first, and planted the *Seeds* of *Mortality* in his *Nature*, he then began to be depriv'd of that *Peace* and *Health*, that *Vigour* and *Immortality* which he possessed before his *Fall*, till at last it brought him down to the *Dust*; and ever since, all the *Sons* of *Adam* have found and felt it an *Enemy* to their *Natures*.

To *Sinners* indeed it is an *Enemy* in a more dreadful *Sense*, and its *Attendants* are more terrible a thousand-fold. For besides all the common *Miseries* of the *Flesh* which they sustain, it delivers over their *Spirits* into everlasting *Misery*; it finishes their *Reprieve*, and their *Hope* forever; it plunges them at once into all the *Terrors* of a
most

most awakened Conscience, and cuts them off from all the Amusements and Cares of this Life, which laid their Guilt and their Conscience asleep for a season. Death consigns over a Sinner to the Chains of the Grave, and the Chains of Hell together, and binds and reserves him a Prisoner of Despair for the most compleat Torments of the second Death.

But I would confine my Discourse here only to *Belivers*, for 'tis with respect to them this Chapter is written. I know *Death* is often called *their Friend*, because it puts an end to their Sins and Sorrows: but this Benefit arises only from the Covenant of Grace, which sanctifies it to some good Purposes to the Children of God, 'Tis constrained to become their Friend in some Instances, contrary to its own Nature and its original Design: But there is reason enough, if we take a Survey of its own Nature, and its present Appearances, to call it an *Enemy* still, upon these following Accounts.

1. *Death has generally many terrible Attendants and Forerunners when it comes; terrible to Nature and the Flesh of the most exalted Christians.*

Here, should I begin to describe the long and dismal Train of Death, the time would fail me. Shall I mention the Sickness and the Pain, the sharp Anguish of the Body, and sometimes the sharper Methods of Medicine to relieve it, all which prove useless and vain in that Day? Shall I recount the tedious and uneasy Hours, the tiresome and sleepless Nights, when the Patient longs for the slow Return of the Morning; and still when the Light breaks, he finds new Uneasiness, and wishes for the Shadow and Darkeness again? Shall I speak of the Dullness of the natural Spirits, and the Clogs that hang heavy upon the Soul

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in those Hours; so that the better Part of Man is bound and oppressed, and shut up, and cannot exert itself agreeable to the Character of an intellectual Being?

Besides, all the Designs of the Mind are interrupted and broken in Death: all that the Saint intended to do for God, is cut off at once, and his holy Purposes are precluded, which often adds to the Trouble of a dying Christian: Psal. cxlvi.

4. *When Man returns to his Earth, in that very Day his Thoughts perish.*

Shall I put you in mind of the Sighs and Sorrows of dearest Friends that stand around the Bed all in Tears, and all despairing? Shall I speak of the last Convulsions of Nature, the sharp Conflict of the Extreme Moments, and the struggling and painful Efforts of departing Life, which none can know fully but those that have felt them, and none of the Dead come back to give us an account? Is it possible for us to survey these Scenes of Misery, and not to believe that the Hand of an Enemy has been there? The Bodies of the Saints are *the Temples of the Holy Ghost, and the Members of Christ*, 1 Cor. vi. 15, 19. Death murders these Bodies, these Members of the Lord, and ruins these Temples to the Dust, and may well be called their Enemy upon this Account.

2. *Death acts like an Enemy, when it makes a Separation between the Soul and the Body.* It divides the Nature of Man in halves, and tears the two constituent Parts of it asunder.

Tho' this becomes an Advantage to the Soul of the Saint thro' the Covenant and Appointment of Grace, yet to have such an intimate Union dissolved between Flesh and Spirit carries something of Terror in it; and there may be an innocent Reluctance in the Nature of the best Christian

Christian against such an Enemy as this: therefore St. Paul, in 2 Cor. v. 4. does not directly desire *to be unclothed, but rather to be clothed upon, that Mortality might be swallowed up of Life;* that is to be translated at once into an immortal State. The *Soul* and *Body* have been long acquainted with each other, and the *Soul* has performed almost all its Operations by the Use of the *Senses* and the *Limbs*: it sees by the *Eye*, it hears by the *Ear*, it acts by the *Hand*, and by the *Tongue* it converses. Now to be separated at once from all these, and to be at once convey'd into a new strange World, a strange and unknown State both of Being and Action, has something in it so surprizing, that 'tis a little frightful to the Nature of Man, even when he is sanctified and fitted for Heaven.

And as the *Soul* is dismiss'd by Death into a State of Separation, so the *Body*, like a fallen Tabernacle, is forsaken, lies uninhabited and desolate. Shall I lead your Thoughts back to the Bed where your dear Relatives expir'd? and give you a sight of the Dead, whose Beauty is turning apace into Corruption, and all the Loveliness or Countenance fled for ever? The Body, that curious Engine of Divine Workmanship, is become a moveless Lump: Death sits heavy upon it, and the Sprightliness and Vigour of Life is perished in every Feature and in every Limb. Shall we go down to the dark Chambers of the Grave, where each of the Dead lie in their cold Mansions in Beds of Darkness and Dust? the Shadows of a long Evening are stretched over them, the Curtains of a deep Midnight are drawn around them, *the Worm lies under them, and the Worm covers them.*

A Saint is no more exempted from all these frightful Attendants of Death, than a Sinner:
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Sect. 1. *The Conquest over Death.*

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Those *Eyes* that have been perpetually lifted up to the God of Heaven in Prayer, lie clos'd under Ground. That *Tongue* that has spoken much for God in the World, lies silent in Death. Those *Hands* that have ministred to the Necessities of the Saints, and those *Feet* that have gone often to the House of God, Death has confined them in his Chains. Those *Natural Powers* that have been active in the Service of the Gospel, can speak, can move, can act no more. But I need not recite these things to you, the Images of them are too fresh and painful, and sit too heavy upon your Remembrance.

3. *Death* is an Enemy to the Saint, so far as it hinders him from the Enjoyment of his perfect Heaven, for it keeps one part of him in the Grave for many Years or Ages.

Let us think of the Dust of the antient Martyrs, the Dust of the Apostles, and the holy Prophets: Let us Look many Ages backward to the Dust of *David*, and *Abraham*, and *Noah*, to the Dust of *Adam* the first of Men: How long have their Souls waited in Heaven, as it were in a widow'd Estate? How long has their Flesh been mingled with common Earth, and lain confin'd under the Bands of Death, useless to all the glorious Purposes of their Formation, and their Being? a tedious Extent of Time! four or five thousand Years, wherein they have done nothing for God in the Body, and in the Body received nothing from God? For Death hinders a Believer from some of the *Business of Heaven*, and some of the *Blessedness of it*.

(1.) *From some of the Business of Heaven*: 'tis only the Soul that is then received to Glory, and dwells there alone for a Season, while Death keeps the Body Prisoner in the Grave; 'tis only the Soul that glorifies its Maker in that upper World,

World, the World of Spirits, for the Flesh lies silent in the Dust: *The Grave cannot praise thee, Death cannot celebrate thee, O Lord; Isa. xxxviii. 18.* The Body is redeemed with the Blood of *Christ* as well as the Soul, but Death puts Fetters upon it, and forbids it to serve its Redeemer.

(2.) The Believer is restrained also by Death *from some of the Blessedness of Heaven*; 'tis only the Soul enjoys the Delight, and that too only in its abstracted Nature, and pure intellectual Capacity; 'tis cut off by Death from all that rich Variety of Pleasure which rises from its Communion with so noble a Frame as the Body of Man is. It has no Senses to receive the Satisfactions that arise from the material part of Heaven: It has no Eyes to behold the glorified Flesh of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; no Ears to hear his Voice; no Tongue to converse with its Saviour. And tho' we are sure there is a holy Correspondence between *Christ Jesus* and separate Souls, for we are said *to be present with the Lord, when we are absent from the Body, 2 Cor. v. 8.* yet this Correspondence cannot be so compleat and glorious, as it shall be, when *with our Eyes we shall see God* in the Form of a Man.

'Tis granted, that the separate Heaven of Souls is abundant Pleasure beyond what we can now conceive or express; and our Friends, departed in the Faith, enjoy the delightful Presence of their Lord, and the heavenly Converse of their Fellow-Spirits. That honoured and deceased Saint, whom we this Day mourn, dwells with that *Jesus*, with whom she had long been acquainted: She converses with him in Heaven, whom she loved much upon Earth: She finds herself safe for ever in his hands, to whose Care she committed her immortal Concerns; and she rejoices in the sight of him above, with whom she held many Hours of sweet Corre-

Correspondence by Faith here below. Doubtless also, she holds sweet Conversation with the holy *Souls* that went to Heaven before her. A Soul so greatly desirous of spiritual Discourse as she was, so constantly prepared for pious Conference and mutual Communications of sacred Knowledge, must needs enjoy that Privilege, and that Pleasure in that upper World, where there is nothing all round her, but what is Holy and Divine. But it is certain she cannot enjoy that Perfection of humble Society with *Christ* in his glorified human Nature, nor with *Fellow-Saints*, while she is deprived of one part of herself, her Body lying silent and moveless in the Prison of the Grave: and yet she waits for the more compleat Satisfaction of all her Hopes, when *Death her last Enemy shall be destroy'd*, and her Body redeemed from the Dust, together with the Bodies of all the Saints. This leads me to the next Particular.

4. *Death* is an Enemy to Believers, because it divides them for a Season from the Company of their known and valuable Friends, and parts the dearest Relatives asunder.

Tho' dying Saints be transmitted into better Company, even to the *Spirits of the Just made perfect*, yet 'tis a mournful Thought to be separated so long from those whom they loved with so strong and just an Affection. It adds a Sharpness even to the last Agonies, when we think we must leave Parents, Children, or Friends behind us, whom we love so tenderly; that we must leave them amidst the Sorrows and the Temptations of a vain World and a corrupt Age; that we must leave them struggling with all the Difficulties, the Hardships and the Dangers that attend a *Christian* in his Travels thro' this Wilderness, and not see their Faces again in the Flesh, nor converse with them in the manner we were wont to do, till the *Heavens be no more*. Upon

Upon this account also *Death* is a worse Enemy to those that survive, for they sustain the biggest loss: it deprives them of their dear and delightful Relatives without any Recompence, for the World grows so much the more undesirable to a Saint by the Death of every Friend. Children are torn away from the Embraces of their Parents, and the Wife is seized from the Bosom. This is, as it were, tearing the Flesh asunder of those whose Hearts are join'd; this gives occasion to bitter Sorrows, to long and heavy Complaints. How suddenly are we sometimes deprived of the Desires of the Eyes, and the Comforts of Life, the Ornaments and the Supports of our Earthly State? And we have lost all their Love, and their Counsel, and their Care; all their sweet Sympathy of Joys and Sorrows, all their agreeable Conversation and heavenly Advice. What a tedious way have we to walk thro' without such a Guide or Helper? We have lost the Benefit of their watchful Eye, their holy Jealousy for our Souls, their fervent and daily Prayers. But there are Records in Heaven, where all the Prayers of the Saints are kept; and God often turns over his Register, and in distant successive Years, pours down Blessings upon the Posterity, and multiplies his Graces amongst them, in answer to the Requests that were offered up on Earth by the Saints that are now with God.

5. The last Reason I shall mention to prove *Death* an Enemy to the Saints, is the Terror that it fills the Mind with long before-hand. There are but few that in their best Estate on Earth, are got quite above these Terrors, and there are none can say, *I have been always free from them*: so that in the younger Days of their Christianity at least, all have been afraid of Death; and these Fears are Enemies to our Peace. Some spend all their Lives
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in this Bondage of Fear, and that upon different Accounts.

A Christian of *weaker Faith* cries out within himself, "how shall I pass that awful Moment that sets my Soul naked before the Eyes of a holy God, when I know not whether I am cloathed with the Righteousness of his Son or no, whether I shall stand the Test in that Day? I dread that solemn, that important Hour that shall put me into an unchangeable State of Miseries that are infinite, or of infinite Blessedness. How shall I that am a Sinner stand before that Tribunal and that Judge in whose Sight no Mortal can be innocent? My Evidences for Heaven are dark and cloudy, that I cannot read them; they have been often sullied with fresh Guilt, and I doubt whether I am new-born or no, and reconciled to God. And what if I should be mistaken in this Affair of the greatest Moment? The Mistake can never be rectified; therefore I shake at the Thoughts of Death, that Hour of Decision; for my Faith is weak."

Another Saint of a strong and lively Faith, but of a *timorous Temper*, cries out, "How shall I bear the Agonies and the Pangs of Death? I am not afraid to enter into Eternity: The Grace of Christ, and his Gospel, hath given me Hope and Courage enough to be dead; but I am still afraid of dying; 'tis a hard and painful Work, how shall I sustain the sharp Conflict? I shiver at the Thoughts of venturing thro' that cold Flood that divides betwixt this Wilderness and the promised Land."

Another Christian is *too much unacquainted with the World of Spirits*, with the Nature of the separate Heaven, with the particular Business and Blessedness of holy Souls departed; and he is afraid to venture out of this Region of Flesh and Blood,
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into a vast and unknown World. Tho' he has good Hope thro' Grace, that he shall arrive safe at Heaven; yet the heavenly Country is so unknown a Land, and the Valley of Entrance to it so dark, that he fears to pass into it thro' the Shadow of Death.

Another is terrify'd at the Thoughts of Death, because he knows not how to part *with his dear Relatives in the Flesh*, and to leave them expos'd to an unkind Age and a thousand Dangers. "If I had none to leave behind me, I could die with Chearfulness; but while I think of such a Separation, the Thought of Death has Terror in it."

Thus upon various accounts a good Man may have fearful Apprehensions of dying; and that which carries so much Terror about it, may well be called an *Enemy*.

Before we proceed any further, let us make two Reflections on the first general Head.

1st Reflection. If Death be an Enemy to the best of Men in so many respects, then we may infer *the great Evil of Sin*: For it was Sin that brought Death into this our World; *Rom. v. 12. By one Man Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin; and so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned.*

We are too ready to conceive a slight Opinion of the *Evil of Sin*, because 'tis so common to the best of Men, and so constant an Attendant on human Nature daily and hourly; we entertain too gentle and harmless Thoughts of it, because its biggest Evil is of a spiritual kind, and invisible; we see not that infinite Majesty which it dishonours, that spotless Holiness of God which it offends, the Glory and Perfection of that Law which is broken by it: we cannot take but short and scanty notices of the Injuries that it does to God
the

the supreme Spirit, while we are shut up in Tabernacles of Flesh. But here in these *Scenes of Death*, we may survey the sensible and mighty Injury that Sin has done to the *Nature of Man*, and thence infer how *offensive 'tis to God*. By our Eyes and our Ears, we may be terribly convinc'd, that 'tis no little Evil that could occasion such spreading and durable Mischief.

We cannot frame a just Notion of what *Man* was in his State of perfect Innocency, in his original Beauty, and Honour, and immortal Frame; and therefore we cannot so well judge of the Vastness of the Loss which we sustain by Sin; but we can see and feel the formidable Attendants of *Death*, and learn and believe that 'tis a Root of unknown poison'd Bitterness, that has produced such cursed Fruit: Especially if we remember that all the Sorrows before described, fall upon the Saints themselves, even where Sin is pardoned, and Death has lost its Sting. But if we descend in contemplation to the endless and unknown Misery that waits upon the Death of a Sinner, and say, *All these are the Effects of Sin*; how inexpressibly dreadful will the Cause appear? The wise Man has pronounced them *Fools*, by Inspiration, that *make a mock at such Mischief*, Prov. xiv. 9.

2d *Refl.* We may here learn *the Greatness of the Love of Christ*, that would venture into the Land of *Death*, and conflict with this mighty Enemy, and yield to the Power of it for a season, for our sakes. *Greater Love hath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends*; John xv. 13. *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because he died for us*; 1 John iii. 16. Rom. v. 8.

Many terrible Attendants of Death did our Lord meet and struggle with beyond what any of his Saints can feel. Death, like a Lion, ran furious upon

upon him, as it does upon a Sinner, its proper Prey. He met Death in its full Strength and Dominion, for he had all our Sins upon him; and Death had its own sharp Sting when our Lord enter'd the Combat. There was the Wrath of God, which was threatned in the broken Law to mingle with his Pangs and Agonies of Nature: This made his Soul exceeding sorrowful; all his inward Powers were amazed, and his Heart oppress'd with Heaviness; *Mark* xiv. 33, 34. He was almost overwhelm'd in the Garden, before the Thorns or the Nails came near him; and on the Cross he complains of the Forsakings of God his almighty Friend, when Death his mighty Enemy was just upon him; *and all this* (saith he to every Believer) *I bore for thy Sake: My Love was stronger than Death.*

S E C T. II.

Death is the last Enemy.

I Proceed now to the *Second* General propos'd, and that is to enquire, *In what Sense* Death is said to be the last Enemy, or the last that shall be destroyed: For we may join this Word *last*, either to *Death*, or to *Destruction*; and in each Sense it affords Comfort to the Saints.

1. *'Tis the last Enemy that the Saints have to grapple with in this World.* The three great Adversaries of a Christian are the *Flesh*, the *World*, and the *Devil*; and they assault him often in this Life. *Death* comes behind, and brings up the Rear; the Saint combats with this Enemy, and finishes all the War. Every Believer has lifted himself under the Banner of *Christ*, who is the Captain of his Salvation. When he first gives himself

himself up to the Lord, he renounces every thing that is inconsistent with his Faith and Hope, he abandons his former Slavery, undertakes the spiritual Warfare, and enters the Field of Battle.

'Tis a necessary Character of the Followers of Christ, that they fight with the *Flesh*, subdue corrupt Nature, suppress their irregular Appetites, give daily Wounds to the Body of Sin, *Col. iii. 5. Rom. viii. 13.* They fight against this *World*; they refuse to comply with the Temptations of it, when it would allure them astray from the Path of Duty; they defy its Frowns and Discouragements, and break thro' all its Oppositions in their way to Heaven, *James iv. 4.* They resist *Satan* when he tempts them to Sin, and vanquish him by the *Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God*, *Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 17.* and when he accuses them, and attempts to bring Terror into their Souls, they *overcome him, and cast him down by the Blood of the Lamb*, *Rev. xii. 10, 11.* They are made Conquerors over these Adversaries in the Strength of *Christ*. Now the *Pangs of Death* are the last Troublers of their Peace; *Death* is the last *Enemy* that attacks them, and some have very terrible Conflicts with it.

It was in these Agonies, in this sharp Contention, the words of my Text were uttered by that *honoured Saint* whose Memory will be always precious, and whose Loss we this day mourn. This cheerful Language of Hope, among many other Scriptures, broke out from her Lips. Thus lively was her Faith in a dying Hour. Methinks I hear her speaking the Words with a firm Trust in the Promise; "*The last Enemy that shall be destroy'd, is Death.*" and this encouraged her onward thro' the few remaining Struggles of Life and Pain. 'Tis as if she had said, "I have given my self up long ago to *Christ*, I engaged myself

“ young in his Service, I have fought with Sin, I
 “ have learned to subdue Flesh and Sense, and to
 “ live by the Faith of the Son of God : I have
 “ not courted the Flatteries of the World, the vain
 “ Shows of Life ; and I have been enabled to de-
 “ spise the Frowns of it, and been kept stedfast
 “ in my Profession, in the most discouraging and
 “ darkest Times. Thro’ the Grace of *Christ*, I
 “ have overcome the *Evil-One* ; there remains
 “ but one Enemy more, whose Name is *Death*,
 “ and I trust in the same Grace still to obtain
 “ compleat Victory.” Rejoice, ye dear Relatives,
 let all the Friends of the Deceased rejoice, her
 Name is now written down in Heaven amongst
 the Overcomers.

2. *Death* may be called the *last Enemy*, because
’tis not utterly destroyed till the Resurrection, till
Christ hath done all his Work upon Earth, till he
 has subdued all other Adversaries, and made use
 of *Death* as his Slave, to destroy many of them.
’Tis in this Sense especially that the Words of my
Text are written by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25.
Then cometh the End, when he shall have deli-
vered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father ;
when he shall have put down all Rule, and all
Authority, and all Power ; for he must reign till
he hath put all Enemies under his Feet. The last
Enemy that shall be destroyed, is Death.

With regard to each particular Christian, all
 other Enemies are destroyed when he dies, for
 whither he goes, they cannot come ; he puts off the
 Body of *Flesh* and of *Sin* together ; he leaves every
 Corruption behind him, when he ascends to the
 Company of the Spirits of the Just made perfect.
 The Smiles and Frowns of this vain and vexing
 World, are too far off to influence the Inhabitants of
 Heaven ; and *Satan*, the Tempter and Accuser, is for
 ever forbid Entrance at the Gates of that holy City. But
 Death

Sect. 2. *The Conquest over Death.* 27

Death holds one part of the Saint in his Prison, the Grave; and tho' the departed Soul has overcome the Terrors of this Enemy, and triumphs in this Expression, *O Death, where is thy Sting?* yet the Body is confined as a Prisoner under his Power: *But the Hour is coming, when those that are Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God and live.* All the Prisons of the Saints shall be broke to pieces, and burnt up, and the Keeper destroyed for ever.

Let us make these two Reflections on the second general Head of this Discourse.

1st. Reflect. *What abundant Encouragement may we derive from hence, to engage us betimes in a War with all the other Enemies of our Salvation, that having overcome them, we may be assured Death is the Last Enemy we shall meet with: and then also we may face Death with a braver Courage, may conflict with it with better Success, may vanquish it by a lively Faith, and rejoice in the Prospect of its final Destruction.* The same Armour of God, the same divine Weapons, and the same Almighty Assistances by which we have subdued our former Adversaries, *Sin, Satan, and the World,* shall be sufficient to gain this Conquest too. We can't begin the holy Warfare too soon; none of us are too young to be assaulted by *Death*; but let it come never so early in the Morning of our Days, 'tis the *last Enemy* that we can fear, if we are listed in the Army of *Christ*, and have begun the glorious War.

I would address myself to the younger Branches of the mourning House, and say, Have ye had such a noble Example of Victory over Sin and Death in vain? Will ye basely submit to the Slavery of the Flesh, and yield tamely to the Oppositions of this World, which were so bravely resisted by her that is gone before you? Will

ye love this *World*, which is at Enmity with God, and has ever been at enmity with all the Saints? Are ye content to have your Names for ever excluded from that honourable List of Conquerors, where the Names of *your Ancestors* shine before the Throne of God, and are recorded with Honour in the Memory of his Churches? Think how dreadful a Moment that will be, when you shall look *Death* in the Face, if ye have not begun to wage War with *Sin* and *Satan* before! How dreadful to have many Enemies at once assaulting you! the Lusts of your own Heart, the raging Desires after the Enjoyments of this World, the Horrors of Conscience, the Buffetings of the Devil, and the Pangs of Death. What will ye do in the Day of such a Visitation? And remember, that tho' Death be the last Enemy of the Saints, it is not thus with Sinners, it does but transmit them into the World of damned Spirits, where Enemies multiply upon them, and grow more outrageous. Besides the bitter Anguish of their own Conscience, they have the Wrath of a God, whom they have long provoked, and the Malice of evil Angels their Tormentors, to conflict with to all Eternity. But we hope better things of you, and things that accompany Salvation, tho' we thus speak, Heb. vi.9.

2d. *Reflection.* What Divine Comfort is there in my Text for aged Christians and dying Saints, who have been watchful and vigorous in their War with Sin, and gained many Victories over this World and Satan, who is called the God of it? What a delightful View such Persons have, when upon the Borders of Life! Bear up with divine Boldness, ye Heirs of Glory, for you have but one Adversary more to fight with: Let your Faith, and Patience, and holy Courage, hold out a little longer, and Victory and Triumph are yours for

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for ever. There's no Enemy lies in Ambush behind the Tomb; when you have passed the Bars of Death, you are out of the reach of all Adversaries. Beyond the Grave, the Coast is all clear for ever: The Country flows with rich and untasted Pleasures; every Inhabitant is an inward Friend, and Peace and Joy and Love smile in every Countenance.

Will an old Saint complain that he finds many infirmities attend his Age, that his Senses are feeble, that his Eyes are dim, that Satan now and then arises from Hell, and casts a Gloom and Darkness around his Soul, and buffets him sorely in that Darkness? Will he complain that his natural Spirits are heavy, that the World is troublesome to him, and every thing in Life painful? Methinks 'tis a Consolation equal to all these Sorrows, that he is just entering into the last Field of Battle; the last Hour of Controversy is begun; a few Strokes more will decideth the Strife, and make him an eternal Conqueror. *Behold I come quickly, saith our Lord, hold fast that which thou hast gain'd, that no Man take thy Crown,* Rev. iii. 11.

S E C T. III.

The Destruction of Death.

THE *Third* thing we are to enquire, is, *How Death is destroyed, and what are the Steps, or gradual Efforts towards its Destruction.*

The Person that has this Honour put upon him to subdue this universal Tyrant, is our Lord *Jesus Christ*: so the Words inform us all round my Text. Tho' his Mediation for Sinners was sufficient to have prevailed with God to *destroy*

Death at once, yet it was agreed upon in the eternal Counsels, that for wise Ends and Purposes it should be done by degrees. His Blood was of sufficient Value to have procured for his Elect a Deliverance from every Enemy at once, and a Translation to Heaven as soon as they were born; but 'twas wisely concerted betwixt the Father and the Son, that we should pass thro' Temptations, Difficulties, and Death itself; that by feeling the sharp Assaults of our Enemies, we might be better acquainted with the Greatness of our Salvation, and pay a larger Tribute of Thanks and Honours to our Deliverer.

The Steps whereby Death is destroyed, are these:

i. *It is subdued by the Death of Christ; its Sting was then taken away, that is, the Guilt of Sin, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law: but thanks be to God who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Which Verses may be thus explained: Death was the Punishment threatned by the Law for Sin, but Christ, as our Surety, having sustained the Execution of that Threatning, and answered the Law by a Satisfaction equal to the Offence, Death has no more Power over him. *God has raised him up, having loosed the Pains of Death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it; Acts i. 24.* And as *Christ* by his dying is said to *finish Transgression, and make an end of Sin*, because he has taken away its Power to condemn Believers, tho' he has not yet utterly destroyed its Being, so he is said to *have abolish'd Death*, 2 Tim. i. 10. Because he has so far diminished and made void its Power, that it shall not do any final mischief to the Saints. It is like a *Serpent* whose Sting is taken away, and whose Teeth are broken

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en out; it may fright us, and do us some Injury, but it cannot inflict a venomous or fatal Wound. Now the Believer, by a lively Faith, shares in this Victory of *Christ* over Death, and gives thanks to God for it. He knows that though it may hurt his Body, and bring it down to the Grave for a Season, yet it cannot send the Soul to Destruction, nor confine the Body to the Dust any longer than *Christ* shall permit.

2. *Death is taken Captive and enslaved by Christ at his Resurrection and Ascension, and made to serve his holy Purposes*; Psal. lxxviii. 18. *Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led Captivity Captive.* This is spoken of our Lord Jesus, who has taken into his own Dominion, Death and the Devil, who led the World captive. The Enemy is not escaped out of the hands of this Conqueror, but is put under his Yoak, and constrained into his Service.

Death, in its first Character, was the very Threatning and Curse of the Law of God, and includes in it all Misery: But *Christ having borne the Curse, has redeem'd his People from it*, Gal. iii. 13. And now he has taken as many as he pleases of the Threatnings and Terrors of the Law into his own new Covenant, the Covenant of Grace; and has sanctified their Nature, and made them become Blessings to the Saints: *He has turned the Curse into a Blessing*; Deut. xxiii. 5. so that Afflictions, and Pains, and Sorrows, and Death itself are no longer a Curse to them, for they are ordain'd by the Wisdom and Grace of *Christ* to promote their best Interest.

Death, in its original Design, was the Under-Servant of God's avenging Justice: it was the *Jaylor* to bring the Soul out of the Body before the Divine Tribunal, there to receive its Condemnation to Hell. It was the *Executioner* both

to torment and to destroy the Flesh, and send the Spirit into everlasting Misery. But *Christ* having answered all the Demands of this avenging Justice, has also purchased the Sovereignty over Death; and tho' sometimes, when it seizes a Saint, it may for the present signify his Displeasure, as in 1 *Cor.* xi. 30. yet it always fulfils the Designs of his Love, and conveys them into his own delightful Presence: therefore as soon as we are *absent from the Body*, we are said to be *present with the Lord*, 2 *Cor.* v. 8. and when we depart from the Flesh, it is *to be with Christ*; 1 *Phil.* x. 23. *Death* was ordained at first to be a Slave to *Satan*; by the righteous Appointment of God, both *Death* and the *Devil* are Executioners of his Wrath; and *Satan* is said to have some Power over *Death*, *Heb.* ii. 14. But *Christ*, by dying, has subdued *Satan*, spoiled him of his destroying Weapons, has made void his Authority, especially with regard to Believers; he has taken *Death* out of his Power, and manages it himself: and thus *he delivers them who thro' fear of Death were held in a long and painful Bondage*, ver. 15.

'Tis in such Views as these that the Apostle says to the *Corinthian* Believers, *All Things are yours, Things present, and Things to come, this World in the Joys or Sorrows of it, Life and Death, all are yours, and ye are Christ's*, 1 *Cor.* iii. 22, 23. You have an Interest and a Share in the Possessions and the Power of *Christ* over all Things, so far as may promote your Happiness: *Christ* makes *all Things* (even *Death* itself) *work together for the Good* of his People, *Rom.* viii. 28. By *Death* he puts an end to the Body of Sin, and frees the Soul from all those ruffling Passions, those Inquietudes of the Blood, and Disorders of Nature, those strong and perverse Appetites that cost the Christian so much Toil to subdue,
and

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and brought him so often under Guilt, Darkness, and Sorrow. By Death he delivers the Believer from the Pains and Infirmities of the Body, the perpetual Languishings of a weakly Constitution, and the Anguish of acute Diseases. He constrains Death to give the weary Saint Release from all the Miseries of the present State, and to hide him from the Fury of the Oppressor. The Grave is God's Hiding-Place from the Storms and Tumults of the World; *There the Weary are at rest, and the Wicked cease from troubling*: and instead of consigning us over to the full Malice of the Devil, Death is made a means to convey us away from all his Assaults, and translate us into that Country, where he has no Power to enter. And when the Soul is dismissed into the Bosom of a reconciled God by the Ministry of Death, the Body is put to rest in the Grave; the Grave, which is sanctified into a Bed of Rest for all the Followers of *Christ*, since their Lord and Master has lain there.

In the Gospel of *Christ*, the Name of *Death* is altered into *Sleep*. Christ, who has subdued it, seems to have given it this *new Name*, that it might not have a frightful Sound in the Ears of his Beloved. Tho' it was sometimes called *Sleep* in the Old Testament, yet that chiefly regarded the Silence, and Darkness, and Inactivity of the State; whereas in the New Testament, and in the 12th of *Daniel*, 'tis call'd *Sleep*, to denote that there is an *awaking time*. The ancient Christians, upon this account called the *Church-yard* where they buried the Dead, *νομήσιον*, a *Sleeping-Place*. And tho' the Grave may be termed the Prison of Death, yet Death is not Lord of the Prison; he can detain the Captives there but during the Pleasure of *Christ*, for he who is *alive for evermore*, has the *Keys of Death* and

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and Hell; that is, of the separate State, Rev. i.
18.

Now this is the true Reason why Christians have spoken so many kind things of *Death*, which is the *King of Terrors* to a natural Man. They call it a Release from Pain and Sin, a Messenger of Peace, the desir'd Hour, and the happy Moment. All this is spoken while they behold it with an Eye of Faith in the Hands of *Christ*, who has subdued it to himself, and constrained it to serve the designs of his Love to them.

3. *When it has done all Christ's Work, it shall be utterly destroyed.* After the Resurrection, there shall be no more dying. The Saints shall rise immortal, and dwell in Heaven for ever, in the compleat Enjoyment of all that is included in the Name of LIFE. As the Angel in Prophecy lifts up his Hand, and swears by him that lives for ever and ever, that *Time shall be no longer*, Rev. x. 6. So *Christ Jesus*, the Lord of Angels, shall, as it were, pronounce with a sovereign Voice, that *Death shall be no more*. He shall send the great Arch-angel with the Trumpet of God; it shall sound thro' the deepest Caverns of the Grave, and shall summon Death from its inmost Recesses. The Tyrant shall hear and obey, and restore all his Captives out of Prison; *The Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and live*, John v. 25, 28, 29. *They that have done Good to the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil to the Resurrection of Damnation.* After this our Lord has no Employment for Death, his Slave; the Bodies of Men shall die no more: There shall be no more any State of Separation between the Flesh and Spirit, Rev. xx. 14. *And Death and Hell [or Hades] were cast into the Lake of Fire; that is, there shall be no more Death, no Grave, no separate*

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parate State of Souls, all these shall be for ever destroy'd.

1st. Reflection. We may infer from this *third* general Head, *the great Power and Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*; we may learn *the Honour that is due to him from Mortals*; 'tis he that has *subdued Death, and that by his own 'dying.* A wondrous Method of Victory! a surprizing Conquest! and he lives for ever to destroy it in his appointed Time. How great and honourable must he be in the Eyes of a'l Mankind, who has vanquish'd so universal a Conqueror? How desirable is his Person, and how delightful the Sound of his Name to every Believer! For he suppresses all their Enemies, and shall destroy them even to the last. How well does he fulfil the great Engagement? *Hosea xiii. 14. I will ransom them from the Power of the Grave: I will redeem them from Death: O Death, I will be thy Plagues; O Grave, I will be thy Destruction; Repentance shall be hid from mine Eyes.* Let us salute him *the Prince of Life, Acts iii. 15.* and adore him under that Character. He dispossesses Death of all its Dominions. He approves himself a compleat Saviour of all his Saints, and a Redeemer of his Captive Friends.

2d Reflection. We may learn also from this Head of Discourse, *the Power and Excellency of the Gospel of Christ*, for it discovers to us how *this great Enemy is vanquished, and when it shall be destroy'd*; and thus it lays a Foundation for Courage at Death, and gives us Assurance of a Joyful Rising-day. *Death being abolished by the Mediation of Christ, Immortality and Life are brought to light by his Gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10* that is, there's a brighter Discovery of the future State, and of everlasting Happiness, than ever before was given to the World.

Here

Here in the Name of *Christ*, and his Gospel, we may give a Challenge to all other Religions, and say, which of them has borne up the Spirit of Man so high above the Fears of Death as this hath done? or has given us so fair, so rational and so divine an Account how Death has been overcome by one Man, and how by Faith in his Name we may all be made Overcomers? How vain are the Trifles with which the *Heathen Priests* and their *Prophets* amus'd the credulous Multitude? What silly and insipid Fables do they tell us of Souls passing over in a Ferry Boat to the other World, and describe the Fields of Pleasure, and the Prisons of Pain in that Country of Ghosts and Shadows, in so ridiculous a Manner, that the wise Men of their own Nations despised the Romance, and few were stupid enough to believe it all. If we consult the Religion of their *Philosophers*, they give us but a poor, lame, and miserable Account of the State after Death. Some of them denied it utterly, and others rave at random in meer Conjectures, and float in endless Uncertainties. The Courage which some of their *Heroes* profess'd at the Point of Death, was rather a stubborn Indolence, than a rational and well-founded Valour; and not many arrived at this Hardiness of Mind, except those that suppos'd their Existence ended with their Life, and thought they should be dissolv'd into their first Atoms. *Aristotle*, one of the greatest Men amongst them, tells us that *Futurity is uncertain*, and calls Death *the most terrible of all Terribles*.

If we search into the Religion of the *Jews*, which was a Scheme of God's own Contrivance and Revelation to Men, we find the Affairs of a future World lay much in the Dark; their Consciences were not so thoroughly purg'd from the Guilt of Sin, but that some Terrors hung about them,

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them, as appears from *Heb. x. 1, 2, 3.* and having so faint and obscure Notices of the separate State of Souls, and of the Resurrection, these were the Persons who in a special Manner thro' the Fear of Death were all their Life-time subject to Bondage, *Heb. ii. 15.*

But *Christianity* lays a fair and rational Foundation for our Confidence and Triumph in the dying Hour. It shews how Guilt is removed by an all-sufficient Sacrifice, and makes it evident that no Hell, no Vengeance, no Shadows of Misery await the Believer in that invisible World. This makes the Christian venture into it with a certain Boldness, and a becoming Presence of Mind. The Doctrine of *Christ* shews how the *Sting of Death* is taken away, and calls us to fight with a vanquished Enemy, a Serpent without a Sting: it gives us Assurance that we shall rise again from the Dust with Bodies fresher and fairer, glorious in their Frame, and their Constitution immortal; for Death shall be no more. Exalted by so sublime a Hope, what is there in Death sufficient to depress our Spirits, if our Faith were but equal to this admirable Doctrine? The Holy Apostles are Witnesses, the noble Army of Martyrs are Witnesses, and many a Saint in our Day is a Witness to this Truth, and gives Honour to this Gospel. How many Thousands have met Death, and all its frightful Attendants, with a steady Soul, and a serene Countenance; and have departed to Heaven with Songs of Praise upon their Lips, a Smile upon their Face, and Triumph in their Eyes? And this was not owing to any extravagant Flights of Enthusiasm, nor the Fires of an inflamed Fancy, but it has been perform'd often, and may be done daily by the Force of a regular Faith, on the most solid and reasonable Principles; for such are the Principles of the Gospel of *Christ*.

S E C T.

S E C T. IV.

Blessings gain'd by the Destruction of Death.

THE *Fourth* and last general Head of Discourse, is an Enquiry into the *Advantages which the Saints receive by the Destruction of this last Enemy.*

This is a large and endless Field, for it includes a great Part of the Happiness of the final Heaven. But I shall attempt to mention briefly a few of the *Benefits* that attend my Text, and that without a nice Distinction of Particulars.

When Death is destroy'd, *we shall share in the Joy and Triumph of Christ for absolute Conquest over all his Enemies*; for there is scarce any Glory given to *Christ*, consider'd as Man, but the Saints are said to be humble Partners in it, or at least to enjoy the Resemblance. Is he *appointed the Judge of all*? 'Tis promised also to the Saints that they *shall judge Angels, and the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Do we suffer with him; we shall also reign with him.* If we conquer Death by Faith, we shall rise and triumph. Here we labour and fight with many Adversaries, and we think we have routed 'em, but they rally again, and give us fresh Vexation, so that we hardly know how to attempt a Song of Victory on this Side of the Grave. Besides, *Death* still remains for our Trial and Conflict: but there we shall rejoice over all our Enemies, subdu'd, destroy'd, and abolished for ever.

Then God will be all in all to his Saints. This is a Consequent which St. Paul mentions in the Verses where my Text is: God will manage the Affairs of his heavenly Kingdom in a more immediate

mediate Way, than he has managed his Kingdom on Earth, *Christ* having destroy'd all the Enemies of his Church, and presented it safe before the Father, has finish'd all those divine Purposes for which the mediatorial Kingdom was entrusted with him: then he shall resign his Commission to the Father again; and the ever-blessed God shall in a more immediate and absolute Manner reign over all the Creation. He shall more immediately impress Devils and damned Spirits with a Sense of infinite Wrath; and with a more immediate Sense of his Love and eternal Favour, shall he for ever bless all the Inhabitants of Heaven. So much as this seems to be imply'd in the Words of the Apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, &c. But 'tis impossible that in this State we should know either the full Extent, or the just Limitations of that Promise, *God shall be all in all*. Our honoured and departed Friend had these Words dwelling upon her Heart; these were often in her Lips in the Days of her Faith and Hope, and in the Hours of her Passage thro' the dark Valley: She enjoys part of the Pleasure of them in her present Heaven, and with Pleasure she expects the more absolute Accomplishment, when the Resurrection shall compleat the Blessedness of all the Saints.

Another Consequent of the Destruction of Death, is the *Employment of all the Powers of Human Nature in the Service of God, and they shall be neither weak nor weary*. For all the Inconveniencies that attend Mortality shall be swallowed up and lost for ever.

Alas, how poor and imperfect is the Service which our Bodies yield to God in this World! How heavily do our Souls complain of the Clog of this Flesh, and move onwards heavily in Discharge of Duty! and in the Grave the Body is quite cut off from all Service. But when Death shall

shall be dispossest'd, when we shall arise from the Dust, and put on Bodies of Glory; then with our whole Natures, and with all their Powers, we shall do Honour to God our Creator, our Redeemer, and our King. The Time will come when we *shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more*; and the Refreshments of Sleep shall be no more necessary to support Life. When Death shall be destroyed, Sleep, the Image and Picture of Death, shall be destroyed too. There shall be nothing that looks like Death in all that vital World, that World of Immortality. *We shall serve the Lord Day and Night in his Temple*; that is continually, *for there shall be no Night there*, Rev. vii. 15, 16. and xxi. 25.

Then we shall taste all the true Blessedness that Human Nature is capable of, and that without Danger of Excess or Sin. When God first united these two Pieces of his Workmanship, the Soul and Body, and compos'd a Man, he design'd him the Subject of various Pleasures, wherein each Part should have been subservient to the other, to render the Felicity of the Creature perfect. 'Tis Sin and Death that hath enter'd into our Natures, and prevented this noble Design in our present State: but *the Counsel of the Lord shall stand*. And when he raises up the Body from the Grave, it shall leave all the Seeds of Death behind it. The Faculties and the Senses shall awake in all their original Sprightliness and Vigour, and our future Heaven shall be furnish'd with Objects suited to entertain those Powers, and to convey intense Pleasure to glorified Minds, without Danger of Satiety or Weariness. When the Time comes that *there shall be no more Death* God shall wipe away all Tears from our Eyes; *there shall be no Sorrow nor Crying, nor any more Pain: for the former Things are passed away,*

away, and he that sits upon the Throne shall say, Behold I make all Things new! Rev. xxi. 4, 5.

Then shall we enjoy the constant Society of our best Friends, and dearest Acquaintance; those that have arrived at New Jerusalem themselves, and have assisted us in our Travels thither. And we shall delightfully entertain, and be entertain'd with the mutual Narratives of divine Grace, and the wise and holy Methods of Providence, whereby we have been conducted safe thro' all the Fatigues and Dangers of the Wilderness to that heavenly Country.

And that which shall add 'an unknown Relish to all the former Blessings, is the full Assurance that we shall possess them for ever. For every one of our Enemies are then destroy'd, and the last of them is Death. Here on Earth 'tis a perpetual Pain to the Mind to think, that those whom we love are mortal; the next Moment may divide them from us far as the Distance of two Worlds. They are seized on a sudden from our Eyes, and from our Embraces; and this Thought allays the Delight that we take in their Company, and diminishes the Joy: but in that World all our Friends are immortal, we shall ever be with the Lord, and ever with one another too, 1 Thes. iv.

17.

May I be permitted here to make a short Reflection on that mournful Providence that has join'd two lovely Relatives in Death, and given occasion for the sad Solemnities of this Day? The pious Mother led the Way to Heaven, but a few Days before the*
pious

* *The Lady Hartopp, Daughter of Charles Fleetwood, Esq; and Wife to Sir John Hartopp of Newington, Baronet, died Nov. 9th. 1711. Mrs. Gould their Daughter, and Wife to Mr. Gould, (now Sir Nathaniel Gould of Newington) died six Days after, (viz.) Nov. 15th, and left their Households behind them oppress'd with double Sorrows.*

pious *Daughter* followed, each of them the Parent of a reputable Family, and the Descendants from a *Progenitor* †, whose Name is in Honour among the Churches. As mutual Affection join'd their *Habitations in Life*, so the Care of surviving Friends has laid them to rest in their *Beds of Earth* together. We trust they are also joined in the *World of Blessed Spirits* on high, and they shall be join'd again in the *World of glorified Saints* in the Morning of the Resurrection. Death, their common Enemy, has taken them both Captives together; has bound in his Chains the *Mother* and the *Daughter*: but they are Prisoners of Hope, and together they shall obtain a glorious Release.

I would copy a Line from that most beautiful Elegy of *David*, and apply it here with more Justice than the Psalmist could to *Saul* and *Jonathan*, 2 Sam. i. 25. *Lovely and pleasant were they in their Lives, and in Death they were not divided.* Silent were they, and retir'd from the World, and unknown except to their intimate Friends: But God was a Witness of their Hours of divine Retirement. The Graces of Christianity, and the Virtues of domestick Life (which are the proper Ornaments of the Sex) were the Mark of their utmost Aim and Ambition: nor did they seek the Flatteries of the Court, or the City, nor affect the Gaieties of a degenerate Age. Humble they were, and averse from publick Show and Noise; nor will I disturb their Graves by making them the Subject of publick Praise. In the Hearts of their Families, their Memory, their Image, and their Example will live. O may the brightest and best part of their Image and Example live in the Character and Practice of all that are left behind.

What

Sect. 4. *The Conquest over Death.* 43

What a dreadful and overwhelming Thought is it to suppose, that any of that honoured and numerous Household shou'd be divided assunder at the last Day! *Give all Diligence then, my worthy Friends, to make your Calling and your Election sure*; devote yourselves to the God of your Predecessors; trust in the same Saviour; tread in the same Paths of Holiness; and pursue the same Glory. What a Joy will it be to that *pious Lady* that is gone before, to find, that those that were dear to her as her own Soul have overcome Sin and Death, and in a blessed Succession arrive at the same Heaven. Let me intreat you to give her this Satisfaction, and not disappoint her Prayers and her Hopes. Let your venerable surviving Parent (who is now confin'd at home under Sorrows and sharp Pains) obtain this Pleasure. Let that dear Partner of her Joys and Cares behold the Power of Religion appearing and reigning in all your Hearts before his Eyes are closed in Death. Give both of them this Consolation at the Appearance of Christ, that they may say, "*Lord, here we are, and the Children that thou hast given us.*" Here we are with our Ancestors, and our Off-spring, and our Kindred around us, adoring thy rich Grace together, and entering together into the State of perfect Glory, which thou hast prepared.

It remains only that I should propose some *Reflections* on the last Head of Discourse for the Meditation of this whole Assembly, and especially for those that are engaged in the spiritual Warfare, and proceed to daily Conquests.

Shall Death, with all its Attendants, be destroy'd for ever? And are these the Blessings that shall succeed? Then *enter into this Joy before-hand by a lively Faith*, and begin the Song of Triumph
— O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where

where is thy Victory, 1 Cor. xv. 55. Rejoice not over me, O mine Enemy, when I fall I shall arise, Mic. vii. 8.

After you have fought many Battles with *Satan*, subdued many Sins, and encountered a thousand Temptations with Success, perhaps you find new Adversaries still arising; look forward then to this joyful Hour, and say, "But I shall one Day be for ever free from all these Toils and Labours of War, for all my Enemies shall be overcome, since *Death, the last of them, shall be subdued.*"

When you feel the Infirmities of this mortal Body hang heavy upon your Spirits, and damp your Devotion, read the Words of this Promise, and rejoice; "These Pains, and these Languors of Nature shall one Day vanish and be no more; for *Death, with all its Train, must be destroyed.*"

When some of your dearest Friends are seized by this Tyrant, and led away to the Grave in his Chains, while you are wounded to the very Soul, remember, that *Christ*, your Captain, and your Saviour, shall revenge this Quarrel upon your last Enemy; for he has appointed the Hour of his Destruction. *Mourn not, therefore, for the Dead, as those that sorrow without Hope, for those that sleep in Jesus, the Lord shall bring with him when he comes; 1 Thes. iv. 13.* And he shall join you together in a blessed and durable Fellowship, where it shall be eternally impossible for Enemies to break in upon your Peace; for *Death, the last of them, shall then be destroyed.* And the Lord has left us this Comfort in the End of his Sacred Writings, *Surely I come quickly. Let each of us, with a cheerful Heart reply, Even so come, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

The

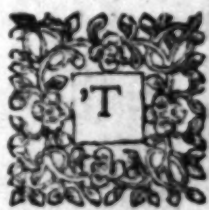


The H A P P I N E S S *of* *separate Spirits, &c.*

Attempted in

A FUNERAL DISCOURSE in Memory of
Sir JOHN HARTOPP, Bart. de-
ceased.

The I N T R O D U C T I O N .



IS a solemn and mournful Occasion that has brought me to this Place this Day*. Divine Providence, and the Will of surviving Relatives, call me to pay the last sacred and pious Respect to the Memory of the Deceas'd, a worthy Gentleman, and an excellent Christian, who has lately left our World in a good old Age.

'Tis something more than ten Years since I was engag'd in the same Service to the Memory of

* Sir John Hartopp, died April 1, 1722, in the 85th Year of his Age; and the Substance of this Discourse was delivered briefly at Stoke-Newington, April 15, following.

of his *honour'd* and *pious Lady*, when by a double and painful Stroke the *Mother* and the *Daughter* were joined in Death; when the two kindred Families were smitten in the tenderest Part, and each of them sustain'd a Loss that could never be repaired*.

This *Town* was the Place which they had all honoured with their Habitation, and spent the largest Part of their Lives amongst you; but they are now become Inhabitants of the *heavenly City*, they dwell in the *World of blessed Spirits*, and I would lead your devoutest Thoughts to follow them thither. Come then, let our Meditations take their Rise from those Words of the great Apostle, in

See a particular Account, *pag. 54.* of the foregoing Discourse in the Margin.

HEB.

HEB. XII. 23.

— *The Spirits of just Men made perfect.*

'TIS a much sweeter Employment to trace the Souls of our departed Friends into those upper and brighter Regions, than to be ever dwelling upon the dark Prospect, and fixing our Eyes upon Death, and Dust, and the Grave: and that not only because it gives us a comfortable View of the Persons whom we mourn, and thus it relieves our most weighty and smarting Sorrows; but because it leads us to consider our own best Interest, and our highest Hopes, and puts us in mind of the Communion that we have with those blessed Spirits in Heaven, while we belong to the Church on Earth, *We are come,* says the Apostle, v. 22. *We, in the Gospel-State, are come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable Company of Angels, and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect.*

What sort of Communion it is that good Men here below maintain with those exalted Spirits, is not my present Business to describe; therefore I apply my self immediately to the Words of my Text, and confine my self to them only.

And here I shall consider these four Things:

I. Who are particularly designed by the *Spirits of the Just*; and here I shall make it evident the Apostle intends not meerly the *Spirits of good Men,*

Men, but such good Spirits as are dismiss'd from their Mortal Bodies.

II. We shall enquire, Wherein consists the *Perfection to which they have arrived*, and what are the *Excellencies in which they are made perfect*.

III. What *sort of Perfection* it is they enjoy, and what are the *peculiar Characters of it*.

IV. *How they arrive at this perfect State*, and what *Influence the Dismission from their Bodies has towards their Attainment of it*.

And then conclude with a few *Remarks* for our *Instruction and Practice*, suitable to the present *Providence*.

S E C T. I.

Of the Spirits of the Just.

OUR first Enquiry is, *Whom are we to understand by the Spirits of the Just here spoken of?*

The Name of *Just* or *Righteous Men* taken in a large and general Sense, as it is often used in Scripture, signifies all those *who fear and love God, and are accepted of him*. In the New Testament they are frequently called *Saints, Believers, or Children of God*: but in both Parts of the Bible they are often described by the Name of *Just, or Righteous*; and they are properly called so upon these three Accounts.

I. *Their Persons are made Righteous in the*
Sight

Sight of God, having their Sins forgiven, and their Souls justified thro' the Death and Righteousness of Jesus Christ. So the Word is used, Rom. v. 18. By the Obedience of one, shall many be made Righteous. They have seen themselves all guilty and expos'd to the Wrath of God, they have fled to lay hold on the Hope set before them, they have mourn'd before God and been weary of Sin, they have receiv'd the great Atonement, they have committed their Case by a living Faith to *Jesus* the Righteous, the Surety and the Saviour of perishing Sinners; and that God hath received them into his Favour, and has imputed Righteousness to them, even that God *who is just, and the Justifier of them that believe in Jesus.* Now this Sense cannot reasonably be excluded from the Character of a Saint, tho' the Word *Righteous* is more frequently taken in the following Senses.

II. *Their Natures are made Righteous, and sanctified by the Spirit of Grace.* They have a Principle of Grace and Holiness wrought in them; so the Word signifies, *Eph. iv. 24. The new Man, which is created after the Image of God, in Righteousness and true Holiness.* They were once Sinners, disobedient and unholy, as they were born into this World; but they are born again, and made new Creatures by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Their Understandings are enlightened to see the dreadful Evil of Sin, and the divine Beauty of Holiness. Their Wills are turned from Folly and Vanity, from the Love of Earth, and Sense, and Sin, to a holy Contempt of the World, and a Hatred of all that is sinful; from a Neglect of Religion, to Desires after God, and a Delight in him; from a meer formal Profession of the Gospel, to the Faith and Love of *Christ*, and a zealous Pursuit of Holiness; and they place their

C

highest

highest Hopes and their Joys in Things Divine, Spiritual, and Eternal.

III. *Their lives are Righteous, and conformable to the Will of God* reveal'd in his Word. So the Term *Righteous* signifies, 1 John iii. 7. *He that doth Righteousness is righteous.* The just Man makes it the Business of his Life to do Works of Righteousness, taken in the largest Sense; to worship God, to seek his Glory, to obey his Will, which is the Rule of Righteousness; to do him all the Service on Earth that his Station and Circumstances admit of, and to deal faithfully and justly among Men, and do them all the Good that lies in his Power.

These are the *just Men* whose *Spirits* are spoken of in my Text.

Now 'tis evident the Apostle here means *their Spirits which are in Heaven*, and departed from *these mortal Bodies*, because the Train of blessed Companions, which he describes just before, leads our Thoughts to the invisible World.

If we can suppose any part of these two Verses to refer to Earth and our present State, it must be when he says, *Ye are come to Mount Zion, to the City of the Living God*, i. e. the visible Church of Christ under the Gospel Dispensation. But then he adds, *Ye are come also to the heavenly Jerusalem*, which may probably include all the Inhabitants of Heaven in general; and descending to Particulars, he adds, *to an innumerable Company of Angels, and to the general Assembly and Church of the First-born who are written in Heaven*: whereby we must understand the whole invisible Church of God among Men, if we do not confine it to those who are already of the Church Triumphant. And next he leads us to God the Judge of all, and to *Spirits of Just Men made perfect*; i. e. Spirits releas'd from Flesh and Blood, who have stood before God
their

their Judge, and are determined to a State of Perfection in Heaven.

Besides, when St. Paul speaks of *Fellow-Christians* here on Earth, it is not his manner to call them *Spirits*, but *Men*, or *Brethren*, or *Saints*, &c. therefore by the naked and single Term *Spirits*, he distinguishes these Persons from those who dwell in mortal Bodies, and raises our Thoughts to the World of Blessed Souls, released from the wretched Ties and Bondage of Flesh and Blood, the Spirits of good Men departed from this Earth, and dwelling in the better Regions of Heaven.

I would here take notice also, that the Apostle perhaps in this Place chuses rather to call them *Just* or *Righteous Men*, which is a Term used frequently both in the Old and new Testament, that he might include the *Patriarchs* and the *Jewish Saints*, as well as the Souls of departed Christians. *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Noah, Daniel, and David, Job, Moses, and Elijah*, dwell in that happy World, with a Thousand other Spirits of Renown in the antient Church, as well as the Spirits of those that have seen the *Messiah*, and believed in *Jesus of Nazareth*. What a noble and wondrous Assembly? What an amazing and blissful Society of human Souls, gathered from various Nations, and from all Ages, and join'd together in the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the Family of God above!

I shall proceed now to the second Thing I proposed.

S E C T. II.

Of their Perfection in Knowledge, Holiness, and Joy.

THE second Enquiry is this, *Wherein consists the Perfection at which these Spirits are arrived.*

The Word *perfect* cannot be taken here in its most extensive, absolute, and sublime Sense, for in that Sense it can belong only to GOD, he is and must be the Sum and Centre of all Perfection for ever; all Excellency and all Blessedness in a supreme Degree meet in him; none besides him can pretend to *absolute Perfection*.

Nor is the Word used here in its most sublime Sense, in which it may be applied to a Creature; for when the Spirits of Just Men are made never so perfect, the blessed Soul of our Lord Jesus Christ will be more than they; for in all things he must have the Preeminence, Col. i. 18.

Perfection therefore is taken in a comparative Sense here, as in many other Places of Scripture. So St. Paul calls those Christians on Earth *perfect*, who are advanced in Knowledge and Christianity far above their Fellows, as in 1 Cor. ii. 6. *I speak Wisdom among them that are perfect.* Philip iii. 15. *Let as many as are perfect be thus minded.* So that blessed Souls above are only *perfect* in a comparative Sense. They are advanced in every Excellency of Nature, and every Divine Privilege, far above all their Fellow-Saints here on Earth.

I desire it also to be observed here, that

The Word *Perfection* doth not generally imply another sort of Character than what a Man possessed before; but a far more exalted Degree of the same Character which he was before possessed of.

The *Perfection* then of the Spirits of the Just in Heaven, is a glorious and transcendent Degree of those spiritual and heavenly Qualifications and Blessings which they enjoyed here on Earth in a lower Measure; implying also, a Freedom from all the Defects and Disorders to which they were here exposed,

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exposed, and which are inconsistent with their present Felicity.

If I were to branch it into Particulars, I would name but these three, *viz.* (1.) A great Increase of Knowledge without the Mixture of Error. (2.) A glorious Degree of Holiness without the Mixture of the least Sin. (3.) Constant Peace and Joy without the Mixture of any Sorrow or Uneasiness.

Let us consider them distinctly.

1. *A great Increase of Knowledge without the Mixture of Error; and in this Sense it is perfect Knowledge.*

Part of the Happiness of Spirits consists in *Contemplation*; and the more excellent the *Object* is which we contemplate, and the more perfect our *Acquaintance* with it, the greater is our *Happiness*. Therefore the Knowledge of God, the infinite and eternal Spirit, is the true Felicity of all the Ranks of created Spirits in the upper and lower Worlds. What unknown and unrivall'd Beauties are contain'd in the Attributes of his Nature! What a heavenly Pleasure is it, to lose ourselves amongst the boundless Perfections of his Self-sufficiency and eternal Existence, his Wisdom, his Power, his Justice, his Holiness, his Goodness, and his Truth! And what a divine Harmony amongst them all!

How does the Philosopher entertain and feast himself with daily Discoveries of new Wonders amongst the Works of God, and beholds the Print of the Hands of his Creator on them all! What superior Glories are seen by the enquiring Christian amongst the greater Wonders of his Grace! and he receives the Discovery of them with superior Delight, for his eternal Life is in them. *John xvii. 3. This is Life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* To know the Father and the Son ac-

cording to the Revelation which they have given of themselves in the Gospel, is not only the Way to obtain Life eternal, and consequently the Business of the Saints below; but the Knowledge of this Son, and this Father in their natural Glories, in their personal Characters, in their sublime and mysterious Relations to each other, and in their most amazing Contrivances and Transactions for the Recovery of lost Sinners, may be Matter of the most pleasing Enquiry, and delicious Contemplation, to the Angels themselves. 1 Pet. i. 12. *These are the things which the Angels desire to look into.* And the Spirits of the Just made perfect are employed in the same delightful Work; for which they have much more Concern, and a dearer Interest in it.

We know something of God by *the Light of Nature*. The Reason that is within each of us, shines like a slender Candle in a private Room, and gives us some twinkling and uncertain Notions of our Creator. The Notices that we obtain by *the Light of Grace*, or the Gospel here on Earth, are far brighter and surer, like the Moon at Midnight shining upon a dark World, or like the Rise of the Morning Star, and the Dawning of the Day. But the Knowledge which departed Spirits obtain of their Creator and their Redeemer in the *Light of Glory*, is far superior to that of *Nature* and *Grace*, as the Lustre of the Meridian Sun exceeds the pale Moon-Beams, or the glimmering Twilight of the Morning.

This is what the Apostle describes, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 11, 12. *For we know but in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a Child, I spake as a Child, I understood as a Child, I thought as a Child; but when I became a Man I put away childish things.*

For

For now we see thro' a Glass darkly; but then Face to Face: Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. The Imperfection of our Knowledge in this World consists much in this, that we are liable to perpetual Mistakes. A thousand Errors stand thick around us in our Enquiries after Truth, and we stumble upon Error often in our wisest Pursuits of Knowledge; *for we see but thro' a Glass darkly, but then we shall know even as we are known, and see Face to Face, i. e.* We shall have a more immediate and intuitive View of *God and Christ, and of the Holy Spirit*, without such Mediums as are now necessary for our Instruction. We shall know them in a manner something a-kin to the Way whereby God knows us, tho' not in the same Degree of Perfection; for that is impossible. Yet in these Respects our Knowledge shall bear some Resemblance to the Knowledge of God himself, (*viz.*) that it shall be, not merely a *rational Knowledge*, by Inferences drawn from his *Works*, not merely a *Knowledge by Narration*, or Report and Testimony, such as we now enjoy by his *Word*; but it shall be such a sort of Knowledge as we have of a Man *when we see his Face*, and it shall also be a *certain and unwavering Knowledge*, without remaining *Doubts*, without *Error*, or *Mistake*. O happy Spirits that are thus divinely employ'd, and are entertaining themselves and their Fellow-Spirits with those noble Truths and transporting Wonders of Nature and Grace, of *God and Christ*, and Things heavenly, which are all Mystery, Intanglement and Confusion to our Thoughts in the present State!

II. This Perfection consists in a *glorious Degree of Holiness without the Mixture of the least Sin*; and in this Sense it is *perfect Holiness*.

All Holiness is contained and summed up in the

Love and delightful Service of God and our Fellow-Creatures.

When we attempt to *love* God here on Earth, and by the alluring Discoveries of Grace try to raise our Affections to Things of Heaven, what sinful Damps and Coldness hang heavy upon us? What Counter-Allurements do we find towards Sin and the Creature, by the mischievous Influences of the Flesh and this World? What an Estrangedness from God do the best of Christians complain of? And when they get nearest to their Saviour in the Exercises of holy Love, they find perpetual reason to mourn over their Distance, and they cry out often with Pain at their Hearts, "*What a cursed Enemy abides still in me, and divides me from the dearest Object of my Desire and Joy!*" But the Spirits of the Just made perfect, have the nearest Views of God their Father, and their Saviour; and as they see them *Face to Face*, so (may I venture to express it) they love them with a *Union of Heart to Heart*: for *he that is joined to the Lord* in the nearest Union in Heaven, may well be called *one Spirit* with him, since the Apostle says the same Thing of the Saints on Earth, 1 Cor. vi. 17.

As our *Love of God* is imperfect here, so is all our *Devotion and Worship*.

While we are in this World, Sin mingles with all our *religious Duties*: We come before God with our Prayers and our Songs, but our Thoughts wander from him in the midst of Worship, and we are gone on a sudden to the Ends of the Earth. We go up to his Temple, and we try to serve him there an Hour or two; then we return to the World, and we almost forget the Delights of the Sanctuary, and the God we have seen there. But the Spirits of the Just made perfect are *before the Throne of God, and serve him*
Day

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Day and Night in his Temple, Rev. vii. 15. And tho' they may not be literally engaged in one everlasting Act of Worship, yet they are ever busy in some glorious Services for him. If they should be sent on any Message to other Worlds, yet they never wander from the Sight of their God: For if the Guardian Angels of Children *always behold the Face of our heavenly Father*, Matt. xviii. 10. even when they are employ'd in their divine Errands to our World; much more may we suppose the Spirits of just Men made perfect never lose the blissful Vision, whatsoever their Employments shall or can be.

And as our Acts of Worship on Earth, and Converse with God, are very imperfect, so is our *Zeal and Activity for God* extremely defective; but it shall be ever bright and burning in the upper World.

When we would exert our *Zeal* for God on Earth, how many corrupt Affections mix with that *Zeal* and spoil it! *Dead Flies*, that cause that noble *Ointment* to send forth a stinking Savour! How much of Self, and Pride, and vain Ambition too often mingles with our Desires to serve *Christ* and his Gospel! Some have preached *Christ* out of Vain Glory, or Envy; and a Mixture of those Vices may taint our pious Ministrations. When we seem to drive furiously like *Jehu* to the Destruction of the Priests and the Worship of *Baal*, too often the Wild-Fire of our Lusts and Passions, our Envy and Wrath and secret Revenge join together to animate our Chariot-Wheels. When we are ready to say with him, "*Come and see my Zeal for the Lord*," perhaps God espies in our Hearts too much of the same carnal Mixture; for *Jehu* exalted the true God, that he might establish himself a King: 2 *Kings* x. 16. But the Spirits of the Just are perfect in *Zeal*, and pure

from all Mixtures. Their very Natures are like the *Angels*, they are so many *Flames* of sacred and unpolluted *Fire*, the *Ministers of God that do his Pleasure*, and then hide their Faces behind their Wings; when they have done *all* for God, they fall down and confess *they are nothing*.

Temptation and Sin have no place in those happy Regions. These are the Evils that belong to Earth and Hell; but within the Gates of Heaven *nothing must enter that tempteth, nothing that defileth*, Rev. xxi. 27. It is the Mixture of sinful Thoughts and idle Words, sinful Actions and irregular Affections that makes our State of Holiness so imperfect here below. *We groan within ourselves, being burdened*; we would be rid of these criminal Weaknesses, these guilty Attendants of our Lives: But the Spirits above are under a sweet Necessity of being for ever holy; their Natures have put on Perfection; the Image of God is so far compleated in them, that nothing contrary to the divine Nature remains in all their Frame; for they see God in all the fairest Beauties of his Holiness, and they adore and love. They behold him without a Veil, and are *changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. If these Words are applicable to the State of Grace, much more to that of Glory. They see *Christ as he is*, and they are *made compleatly like him*, 1 John iii. 2. which is true concerning the State of separate Spirits, as well as the Hour of Resurrection.

As their *Love to God* is perfect, so is their *Love to all their Fellow-Saints*.

We try to *love our Fellow Creatures* and Fellow-Christians here on Earth; but we have so many corrupt Passions of our own, and so many Infirmities and Imperfections belong to our Neighbours also, that mutual Love is very imperfect.

Love

Love is the fulfilling of the Law, Rom. xiii. 10. But we shall never fulfil that Law perfectly till we are join'd to the Spirits of the just in Glory, where there is no Inhabitant without the Flame of sacred Love, no single Spirit unlovely or unbeloved.

In those happy Mansions there is no Envy rais'd by the Perfections or the Honours of our Neighbour Spirits; no detracting Thought is known there, no reproachful Word is heard in that Country; and, perhaps, no Word of Reproach is to be found in the whole heavenly Language. Malice, and Slander, and the very Names of Infamy, are unknown in those Regions; and Wrath and Strife are eternal Strangers. No divided Opinions, no Party-Quarrels, no Seeds of Discord are sown in Heaven. Our little angry Jars and Contentions have no Place there, and the Noise of War and Controversy ceases for ever. There are no Offences given, and none are taken in that World of Love. Neither Injury, nor Resentment, is ever known or practis'd there, those bitter and fatal Springs of Revenge and Blood. Universal Benevolence runs thro' the whole Kingdom; each Spirit wishes well to his Neighbour as to himself; and till we arrive there, we shall never be made perfect in Love, nor shall we see the blessed Characters of it described in the Scriptures fully copied out in living Examples.

In that holy World dwells God himself, who is *original Love*; there resides our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is *Love incarnate*; and from that sacred Head flows an eternal Stream of Love thro' every Member, and blesseth all the Inhabitants of that Land with its divine Refreshments. *Holiness* is perfect among the Spirits of the Just, because *Love* is perfect there.

Object.

The Happiness of Disc. II.

Object. But are there not several Graces and Virtues that belong to the Saints on Earth that are finish'd at Death, and can have no room in Heaven? How then can Perfection of Holiness in Heaven consist in an Increase of the same Graces we practis'd on Earth?

Answ. Yes, there are several such Virtues and such Graces, as *Faith* and *Repentance*, and *godly Sorrow*, *Patience* and *Forbearance*, *Love to Enemies*, and *Forgiveness of Injuries*, &c. But all these arise from the very Imperfection of our present State, from the Sins or Follies of ourselves or our Fellow-Creatures. *Faith* arises from the Want of Sight; *Repentance* from the Returns of Guilt; *Godly Sorrow* from the Workings of Sin in us: *Patience* owes its very Nature and Exercise to the Afflictions we sustain from the Hand of God; and *Forbearance* and *Forgiveness* respects the Injuries that we receive from our Fellow-Creatures. But in Heaven *Faith*, so far as it regards the Absence of *God* and *Christ*, is lost in Sight and Enjoyment, as the Light of a glimmering Taper is lost in the Blaze of Sun-beams. *Repentance* of old Sins, so far as it is attended with any painful or shameful Passions, ceases for ever in Heaven; and there is no new Guilt for us to repent of: there shall be no Evil working in us to give *Pain* to the Spirit; no Affliction from God to demand a *patient Submission*; no Injuries from Men to be *borne* or *forgiven*.

But there the same pious Temper still continues in the Spirits of the Just made perfect, which was the Spring of those Graces on Earth; and could the Objects or Occasions of them return, every Spirit there would exercise the same Grace, and that in a more glorious and, perfect Manner, for their very Natures are all over holy.

III. The last Thing I shall mention, wherein the Perfection of the Saints above consists, is, *their constant Peace and exalted Joy without any Mixture of Sorrow or Uneasiness*; and this is *Joy and Peace in Perfection*.

If our *Knowledge*, our *Love*, and our *Holiness* are imperfect on Earth, our *Joys* must be so. The Mistakes and the Follies to which we are liable here below, the Guilt that pains the Conscience, and the Sin that is restless and ever working within us, will bring forth Fruits of present Sorrow, where they do not produce the Fruit of eternal Death. A Saint in this World will groan under these Burdens; and 'tis divinely natural for him to cry out, *O wretched Man! who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* Rom. vii. 24.

Thus there are many Things that are within us, and that belong to us in this World, that forbid the Perfection of our Joys. And besides all these, we are attach'd and tied down to many other Uneasinesses, while we dwell on Earth.

This World is a fair Theatre of the Wisdom and Power of God, but 'tis hung round and replenished with Temptations to fallen Man, proper for a State of Tryal; soft and flattering Temptations, that by the Senses are ever drawing away the Soul from God and Heaven, and breaking in upon its divine Repose and Joy: and while we are surrounded with a thousand Dangers, we cannot be said to dwell in perfect Peace. The Follies and the Crimes of others afflict the Soul of a good Man, and put him to pain, as the *righteous Soul of Lot was vexed by Sodom from day to day with their unlawful* & Beas. 2 Pet. ii. 8. The greater Vexations, and the little teasing Accidents of Life that attend us, disturb the sacred Rest of the Saint, and ruffle or wound his Spirit. And the best of Men on this account are sometimes ready

ready to cry out with *David*, Psal. cxx. 5, 6. *Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech, and sojourn in the Tents of Kedar: My Soul hath long dwelt with them that hate Peace. O that I had Wings like a Dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest,* Psal. lv. 6.

And sometimes God himself is absent from the Soul that longs after him; he *hides his Face*, and then *who can behold it?* We are smitten with a Sense of Sin, and the Conscience is restless. We wander from thing to thing in much Confusion of Spirit; we go from Providences to Ordinances, from one Word in the Bible to another, from Self-Examination and inward Guilt to the Blood of *Christ* and the Mercy of the Father; and it may be outward Sorrows fall on us at the same time, Guilt and Judgment attend us at once: The *Deep* of Affliction calls to the *Deep* of Sin at the *Noise of the Floods* of Divine Anger, Psal. xlii. 7. We are kept in the Dark for a Season, and we see not the Light of his Countenance, nor know our own Interest in his Love. *We go forward as Job did, but he is not there; and backward, but we cannot perceive him, &c.* All the Comfort that a good Man hath at such a Season, is to appeal to God, that *he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath try'd me, I humbly hope I shall come forth as Gold,* Job xxiii. 8, 9, 10.

But the Spirits of the Just made perfect, are in peaceful and joyous Circumstances. *They know God*, for they see his Face; they *know that they love him*, for they feel and enjoy it as the warmest and sweetest Affection of their Hearts: and *they are sure God loves them*; for every Moment they taste his Love, and live upon it in all the rich Varieties of its Manifestation.

O what unknown and endless Satisfactions of Mind arise from a full Assurance of the Love of God!

God! What Tongue can express, or what Heart can conceive the sacred Pleasure that fills every Soul in Heaven, under the immediate Impressions of Divine Love! When the poor *trembling doubting Believer*, that knew himself to be infinitely unworthy of the Favour of God, or of the meanest Place in his House, shall be acknowledged as a *Son* in the midst of his *Father's Court* on high, and amongst Millions of congratulating Angels!

No Cloud shall ever interpose, no melancholy Gloom, no Shadow of Darkness shall ever arise in those Regions; for the Countenance of God, like the Sun in its highest Strength, shall shine and smile upon them for ever. And through the Length of all their immortality, there shall not be the least Interruption of the sweet Intercourse of Love, on God's side, or on theirs.

In that World there is no Sorrow, for there is no Sin; *the Inhabitants of that City*, of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, shall never say *I am sick*; for *the People that dwell therein shall be forgiven their Iniquity*, Isa. xxxiii. 24. When the Righteous are dismiss'd from this Flesh, *they enter into Peace*, their Bodies rest in their Beds of Earth, and their Spirits walk in Heaven, *each one in his own Uprightness*, Isa. lvii. 2.

And as there is no Sin within them to render them uneasy, so there is no troublesome Guest, no evil Attendant without them, that can give them Fear or Pain; no Sinners to vex them, no Tempter to deceive them, no Spirit of Hell to devour or destroy: *Isa: xxxv. 9, 10. No Lion shall be there, nor any ravenous Beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the Redeemed shall walk there. And the Ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with Songs, and everlasting Joy upon their Heads: they shall obtain Joy*

Joy and Gladness, and Sorrow and Sighing shall flee away.

God himself shall never be absent, and then they cannot be unhappy. They *behold his Face in Righteousness, and they are satisfied when they awake with his Likeness*, Psal. xvii. ult. When they leave this World of Dreams and Shadows, and awake into that bright World of Spirits, they behold the Face of God, and are made like him, as well as when their Bodies shall awake out of the Dust of Death in the Morning of the Resurrection, form'd in the Image of the Blessed Jesus. That glorious Scripture in *Rev. xxi. 3, 4.* (be the Sense of it what it will) can never be fulfilled in more Glory on Earth than belongs to the State of Heaven. *The Tabernacle of God is with Men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his People, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes; and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain: for the former things are passed away.*

The Saints above see their blessed Lord and Saviour in all his exalted Glories, and they are with him where he is, according to his own Prayer and his own Promise, *John xvii. 24.* and *xiv. 3.* They are *absent from the Body, and present with the Lord.* They have esteem'd him on Earth above all things, and longed after the Sight of his Face, *whom having not seen they loved*, 1 Pet. i. 8. but now they behold him, the dear Redeemer that gave his Life and Blood for them, *they rejoice with Joy much more unspeakable and full of superior Glory.*

Thus I have shewn wherein *this Perfection of Spirits* in Heaven consists. It is a high and glorious Degree of all those Excellencies and Privileges

leges they were blessed with on Earth, without any Mixture of the contrary Evil. It is a *Perfection of Knowledge, Holiness and Joy.*

And can'st thou hear of all this Glory, O my Soul, and meditate of all this Joy, and yet cleave to Earth and the Dust still? Hast thou not often mourn'd over thy *Ignorance*, and felt a sensible Pain in the Narrowness, the Darknefs, and the Confusion of thy Ideas, after the utmost Stretch and Labour of Thought? How little dost thou know of the Essence of God, even thy God, and how little of the two united Natures of *Jesus* thy beloved Saviour? How small and scanty is thy Knowledge of thyself, and of all thy Fellow Spirits, while thou art here imprisoned in a Cottage of Clay? And art thou willing to abide in this dark Prison still, with all thy Follies and Mistakes about thee? Does not the Land of Light above invite thy Longing and awaken thy Desires; those bright Regions where Knowledge is made perfect, and where thy God and thy Redeemer are seen without a Veil?

And is not the *perfect Holiness* of Heaven another Allurement to thee, O my Soul? Dost thou not stretch thy Wings for Flight at the very mention of a *World without Temptation and without Sin*? How often hast thou groaned here under the Burden of thy Guilt, and the Body of Death? How hard hast thou wrestled with thy inbred Iniquities? An hourly War, and a long toilsome Conflict! How hast thou mourn'd in secret, and complain'd to thy God of these restless inward Enemies of thy Peace? And art thou so backward still to enter into those peaceful Regions where these Enemies can never come, and where Battle and War are known no more, but perfect and everlasting Holiness adorns the Inhabitants, and Crowns of Victory and Triumph?

O the shatter'd and imperfect Devotion of the best Saints on Earth! O the feeble fluttering Efforts of Praise! What poor *Hallelujahs* we send up to Heaven on Notes of Discord, and as it were, on broken Strings! Art thou not willing, O my Soul, to honour thy God and thy Saviour with sweeter Harmony? And yet what a Reluctance dost thou show to enter into that World of Joy and Praise, because the dark Shadow of Death hangs over the Passage? Come, awake, arise, shake off thy Fears; and let the Sense and Notice of what *the Spirits of the Just* above enjoy, raise thy Courage, and excite thee to meet the first Summons with sacred Delight and Rapture.

But I fear I have dwelt too long upon these three last Particulars, because they are Matters of more obvious Notice, and more frequent Discourse; yet they are so entertaining, that I knew not how to leave them. But I would not spend all my Time on *common Topics*, while I am paying honour to the Memory of an *uncommon Christian*.

I proceed therefore to the next general Head.

S E C T. III.

Of the various Kinds and Degrees of the Employments and Pleasures of Heaven.

HAVING shown that by the *Spirits of Just Men* in my Text, we are to understand *the Souls of all the Pious and the Good that have left the Body*; and having described their *Perfection* as a State of compleat Knowledge, Holiness and Joy; the third Thing I am to consider, is, *What sort of Perfection this is*, or what are some of the *special Characters of it*. And here I beg your attention to some pleasing Speculations which are agreeable to the Word of God,

God, and to the Nature and Reason of Things, and which have often given my Thoughts a sacred Entertainment.

I. It is such a Perfection as *admits of great Variety of Employments and Pleasures, according to the various Turn and Genius of each particular Spirit.* For the word *Perfection* does not necessarily imply a State of universal and constant *Uniformity.*

That the Mind of every Man here on Earth has a different *turn of Genius*, and peculiar *Manner of Thought*, is evident to every wise Observer. And why should not every pious Mind or Spirit carry to Heaven with it so much of that *Turn and Manner*, as is natural and innocent?

I grant it is a possible Thing, that many different *Genius's* of Men on Earth may perhaps be accounted for by the different Constitution of the Body, the Frame of the Brain, and the various Texture of the Nerves, or may be ascribed to the coarser or finer Blood, and corporeal Spirits; as well as to different Forms of Education and Custom, &c. These may be able to produce a wondrous Variety in the Tempers and Turns of Inclination, even tho' all Souls were originally the same: But I dare not assert that there is no difference betwixt the *Souls* themselves, at their first Creation and Union with the Body. There are some Considerations would lead one to believe, that there are *real Diversities of Genius* among the Spirits themselves in their own Nature.

God, the great Creator, hath seemed to delight himself in a rich Variety of Productions in all his Worlds which we are acquainted with. Let us make a Pause here, and stand still and survey the overflowing Riches of his Wisdom, which are laid out on this little Spot of his vast Dominions,

nions, this earthly Globe on which we tread; and we may imagine the same Variety and Riches overspreading all those upper Worlds which we call *Planets* or *Stars*.

What an amazing Multiplicity of Kinds of Creatures dwell *on this Earth*? If we search the *animated World* and survey it, we shall find there are some that fly, some that creep or slide, and some walk on Feet, or run: And every sort of Animals cloathed with a proper Covering; some of them more gay and magnificent in their Attire than *Solomon* in all his Glory; and each of them furnish'd with Limbs, Powers and Properties fitted for their own Support, Convenience and Safety. How various are the Kinds of *Birds* and *Beasts* that pass daily before our Eyes! The Fields, and the Woods, the Forests and the Desarts, have their different Inhabitants. The savage and the domestic Animals, how numerous they are! and the Fowl both wild and tame! What Riches of Dress and Drapery are provided to cloath them in all their proper Habits of Nature? What an infinite number of painted Insects fill the Air, and overspread the Ground? What bright Spangles adorn their little Bodies and their Wings, when they appear in their Summer Livery? What interwoven Streaks of Scarlet Beauty mingled with Green and Gold? We behold a strange Profusion of divine Wisdom yearly in our own Climate, in these little animated Crumbs of Clay, as well as in the Animals of larger Size. And yet there are Multitudes of new strange Creatures that we read of in the Narratives of foreign Countries: And what a vast Profusion of Entertainments for them all? How are the Mountains and Meadows adorn'd with a surprizing Plenty of Grass and Herbs, Fruits and Flowers, almost infinite for the Use of Man and meaner Animals?

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In the *World of Waters* a thousand unknown Creatures swim and sport themselves, and leap with Excess of Life even in the freezing Seas: Millions of Inhabitants range thro' that liquid Wilderness with swiftest Motion, and in the Wonders of their Frame and Nature proclaim the Skill of an Almighty Maker. Others of the watry Kind are but half alive, and are toss'd from place to place by the heaving Ocean. Think of the *Leviathan*, the *Eel*, and the *Oyster*, and tell me if God has not shewn a rich Variety of Contrivance in them: And as various as their Nature is, so various is the Means of their Life; proper Beds of Lodging are provided for them, and Variety of Food suited to uphold every Nature.

Mankind is a World of itself, made up of the mingled or united Natures of *Flesh* and *Spirit*. What an infinite Difference of Faces and Features among the Sons and Daughters of Men? And how much more various are the Turns of their Appetites, Tempers and Inclinations, their Humours and Passions? And what glorious Employment hath divine Wisdom ordained for itself, in framing these Millions of Creatures with understandings and Wills of so unconceivable a Variety, so vast a Difference of Genius and Inclination, to be the Subjects of its providential Government? And what a surprizing Harmony is there in the immense and incomprehensible Scheme of divine Counsels, arising from the various Stations and Businessess of Men so infinitely diversified and distinct from one another, and centring in one great End, the divine Glory? An amazing Contrivance, and a Design worthy of God!

Now is the *pure intellectual World* alone destitute of this delightful Variety? Is the *Nature of Spirits* utterly incapable of this Diversity and

and Beauty, without the Aids of *Flesh* and *Blood*? Hath the Wisdom of God display'd no Riches of Contrivance there? And must there be such a dull Uniformity no where but in the Country where Spirits dwell, Spirits the noblest Part of God's Creation and Dominion? Has he poured out all the various Glories of divine Art and Workmanship in the *inanimate* and *brutal* or animal World, and left the higher sort of Creatures all of one Genius and one Turn and Mould, to replenish all the intellectual Regions? Surely 'tis hard to believe it.

In the *World of Angels* we find various Kinds and Orders. St. Paul tells us of *Thrones*, and *Dominions*, and *Principalities*, Col. i. 16. and St. Peter speaks of *Angels*, and *Authorities*, and *Powers*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. and in other Parts of the Word of God we read the Names of an *Arch-Angel*, a *Seraph*, and a *Cherub*. And no doubt, as their *Degrees* and *Stations* in the heavenly World differ from each other, so their *Talents* and *Genius's* to sustain those different Stations are very various, and exactly suited to their Charge and Business, and 'tis no improbable Thought, that the *Souls of Men* differ from each other as much as *Angels*.

But if there were no difference at first betwixt the Turn and Genius of different Spirits in their *original Formation*, yet this we are sure of, that God design'd their Habitation in *Flesh* and *Blood*, and their Passage thro' this World as the Means to form and fit them for various Stations in the unknown World of Spirits. The Souls of Men having dwelt many Years in particular Bodies, have been influenced and habituated to particular Turns of Thought, both according to the *various Constitutions* of those Bodies, and the more various *Studies* and *Businesses*, and *Occurrences* of

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of *Life*. Surely then we may with reason suppose the Spirits departing from *Flesh* to carry with them some Bent and Inclination towards various Pleasures and Employments.

So we may reasonably imagine each *sinful Spirit* that leaves the Body, to be more abundantly inflamed with these particular Vices which it indulged here, whether *Ambition*, or *Pride*, or *Covetousness*, or *Malice*, or *Envy*, or *Aversion to God*, and to all Goodness: and their various *Sorts of Punishments* may arise from their own *Variety of Lusts*, giving each of them a peculiar inward Torment.

And why may not the *Spirits of the Just made perfect* have the same *Variety of Taste and Pleasure* in that happy World above, according as they are fitted for various Kinds of sacred Entertainments in their State of Preparation, and during their Residence in *Flesh and Blood*? *He that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God*, 2 Cor. v. 5.

In the World of human Spirits made perfect, *David* and *Moses* dwell: Both of them were trained up in feeding the Flocks of their Fathers in the Wilderness, to feed and to rule the Nation of *Israel*, the chosen Flock of God. And may we not suppose them also train'd up in the Arts of holy Government on Earth, to be the Chiefs of some blessed Army, some sacred Tribe in Heaven? They were *Directors* of the Forms of Worship in the Church below under divine Inspiration: And might not that fit them to become Leaders of some Celestial Assembly, when a Multitude of the Sons of God above come at stated Seasons to present themselves before the Throne? Both of 'em knew how to celebrate the Praise of their Creator in sacred Melody; but *David* was the Chief of Mortals in this harmonious Work: And may we not imagine that he
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is or shall be a Master of heavenly Musick, before or after the Resurrection, and teach some of the Choirs above to tune their Harps to the *Lamb that was slain*?

But to come down to more modern Times. Is there not a *Boyle* * and a *Ray* † in Heaven? Pious Souls who were trained up in sanctify'd Philosophy; and surely they are fitted beyond their Fellow-Saints, to contemplate the Wisdom of God in the Works of his Hands. Is there not a *More* § and a *Howe* **, that have exercis'd their Minds in an uncommon Acquaintance with the World of Spirits? And doubtless their Thoughts are refin'd and improv'd in the upper World, and yet still engag'd in the same Pursuit. There's also a *Goodwin* †† and an *Owen* §§, who have laid out the Vigour of their Inquiries in the Glories and Wonders of the Person of *Christ*, his bloody Sacrifice, his dying Love, and his exalted Station at the right Hand of God. The *first* of these, with a penetrating *Genius*, traced out many a new and uncommon Thought, and made rich Discoveries by digging in the Mines of Scripture. The latter of them humbly pursued and confirm'd divine Truth; and both of them were eminent in promoting Faith and Piety, spiritual Peace and Joy, upon the Principles of Grace and

* The Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esq; a most pious Enquirer into Nature, and an Improver of the experimental Philosophy.

† Mr. *John Ray*, one of the Ministers ejected for Nonconformity 1662, he employ'd most of his Studies afterward in the Cultivation of Natural Philosophy, in Collections and Remarks on the Variety of Plants, Birds, Beasts, Fishes, &c. and writ several Treatises to improve Natural Philosophy to the Service of Religion.

§ Dr. *Henry More*, a great Searcher into the World of Spirits, and a pious Divine of the Church of *England*.

** Mr. *John Howe*, a Name well known and highly honour'd for his Sagacity of Thought, his exalted Ideas, and Converse with the spiritual World, as appears in his Writings.

†† Dr. *Thomas Goodwin*. And,

§§ Dr. *John Owen*, two famous Divines of prime Reputation among the Churches in the last Century.

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and the Gospel. Their Labours in some of these Subjects, no doubt, have prepar'd them for some correspondent Peculiarities in the State of Glory. For tho' the Doctrines of the *Person*, the *Priesthood*, and the *Grace of Christ*, are Themes which all the glorified Souls converse with and rejoice in; yet Spirits that have been train'd up in them with peculiar Delight for forty or fifty Years, and devoted most of their Time to these blessed Contemplations, have surely gain'd some Advantage by it, some peculiar Fitness to receive the heavenly Illuminations of these Mysteries above their Fellow-Spirits.

There's also the Soul of an ancient *Eusebins**, and the later Spirits of an *Usher* † and a *Burnet* ‡, who have entertain'd themselves and the World with the *sacred Histories of the Church*, and the Wonders of divine Providence in its Preservation and Recovery. There's a *Tillotson* §, that has cultivated the Subjects of *Holiness*, *Peace* and *Love*, by his Pen and his Practice: There's a *Baxter* ¶, that has wrought hard for an End of Controversies, and labour'd with much Zeal for the *Conversion* of Souls, tho' with much more Success in the last than in the first.

Now tho' all the Spirits in Heaven enjoy the general Happiness of the *Love of God and Christ*, and the pleasurable *Review of Providence*; yet

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* *Eusebius*, one of the Fathers of the Christian Church, who wrote the History of the Primitive Ages of Christianity.

† Dr. *John Usher*, in the last Century Archbishop of *Ardmagh*, whose Chronological Writings and his Piety have render'd his Name honourable in the World.

‡ Dr. *Gilbert Burnet*, late Bishop of *Salisbury*, whose serious Religion and Zeal to promote it among the Clergy, made him almost as famous as his *History of the English Reformation*.

§ The Names of Dr. *John Tillotson*, late Archbishop of *Canterbury*, and of ¶ Mr. *Richard Baxter*, a Divine of great Note among the Protestant Dissenters, need no further Paraphrase to make them known.

may we not suppose these Spirits have some *special Circumstances of sacred Pleasure*, suited to their Labours and Studies in their State of Trial on Earth? For the Church on Earth is but a *Training School* for the Church on high, and as it were a *Tiring-Room* in which we are drest in proper Habits for our Appearance and our Places in that bright Assembly.

But some will reprove me here, and say, What must none but *Ministers*, and *Authors*, and *Learned Men* have their distinguish'd Rewards and Glories in the World of Spirits? May not *Artificers*, and *Traders*, and *pious Women* be fitted by their Character and Conduct on Earth for peculiar Stations and Employments in Heaven?

Yes doubtless, their Zeal for the Honour of God, their fervent Love to *Christ*, their Patience under long Trials, and the Variety of their Graces exercis'd according to their Stations on Earth, may render them peculiarly fitted for special Rewards on high: The Wisdom of God will not be at a loss to find out distinguishing Pleasures to recompence them all; tho' where the very *Station* and *Business* of this Life is such as makes a nearer Approach to the *Blessedness* and *Business* of Heaven, 'tis much easier for us to guess at the nature of that future Recompence.

Let me ask my own Soul then, "Soul, what art thou busy about? What is thy chief Employment during thy present State of Trial? I hope thou art not *making Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof*; for then thou art fit for no Place in Heaven, the Doors will be for ever shut against thee. But what special *Works of the Spirit* art thou engaged in? Dost thou redeem what Hours thou art able, from

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“ the necessary Business of Life, to do more
 “ immediate Service for God, to converse with
 “ Things heavenly? Art thou seeking to gain a
 “ proper Meetness for the sublimer Employments
 “ of that upper Word, and a Relish of the most
 “ refined Pleasures?”

But I proceed to the 2d Particular.

II. The *Perfection* of the Spirits above, not only admits of a rich Variety of Entertainments, according to the various Relish and Inclination of the Blessed, but 'tis such a Perfection *as allows of different Degrees even in the same Blessedness, according to the different Capacities of Spirits, and their different Degrees of Preparation.* The Word *Perfection* does not always require *Equality*.

If all the Souls in Heaven were of one *Mould*, and *Make*, and *Inclination*, yet there may be different *Sizes of Capacity* even in the same Genius, and a different *Degree of Preparation* for the same Delights and Enjoyments: therefore tho' all the Spirits of the Just were uniform in their Natures and Pleasures, and all perfect; yet one Spirit may possess more Happiness and Glory than another, because it is more capacious of intellectual Blessings, and better prepar'd for them. So when Vessels of various Size are thrown into the same Ocean, there will be a great Difference in the Quantity of the Liquid which they receive, tho' all might be full to the Brim, and all made of the richest Metal.

Now there is much Evidence of this Truth in the Holy Scripture. Our Saviour intimates such Differences of Rewards in several of his Expressions. *Mat. xix. 28.* he promises the Apostles, that they *shall sit on twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.* And 'tis probable this

may denote something of superior Honour or Dignity above the meanest of the Saints. And even among the Apostles themselves he seems to allow of a Difference; for tho' he would not promise *James and John to sit next to him, on his right Hand and his left in his Kingdom*, Mat. xx. 20, &c. yet he does not deny that there are such distinct Dignities, but says, *It shall be given to them for whom 'tis prepared of his Father*, ver. 23.

Again, our Lord says, *Mat. x. 41, 42. He that receives a Prophet, and entertains him as a Prophet, shall have a Prophet's Reward; and he that entertains a Righteous Man, agreeable to his Character, and from a real Esteem of his Righteousness, shall have a Righteous Man's Reward:* And even the meanest sort of Entertainment, *a Cup of cold Water given to a Disciple*, for the sake of his Character, shall not go without some Reward. Here are three Sorts or Degrees of Reward mentioned, extending to the Life to come, as well as to this Life: Now tho' neither of them can be merited by Works, but all entirely conferred by Grace, yet, as one observes here, "The Lord hath fixed a Proportion between the Work and the Reward; so that as one has different Degrees of Goodness, the other shall have different Degrees of Excellency."

Our Saviour assures us, that the *Torments of Hell* shall admit of various Degrees and Distinctions; some will be more exquisite and terrible than others: *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment*, who never sinned against half so much Light, than it shall be for *Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum*, where *Christ* himself had preached his Gospel, and confirmed it with most evident Miracles, *Mat. xi. 21--24.* And the *Servants who did*

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not the Will of their Lord, shall be beaten with more or fewer Stripes, according to their different Degrees of Knowledge and Advantages of Instruction; *Luke xii. 47, 48.* Now may we not, by a parallel Reasoning, suppose there will be various Orders and Degrees of *Reward in Heaven*, as well as *Punishment in Hell*; since there is scarce a greater Variety among the Degrees of Wickedness among Sinners on Earth, than there is of Holiness among the Saints?

When the Apostle is describing the Glories of the Body at the Great Resurrection, he seems to represent the Differences of Glory that shall be conferred on different Saints, by the Difference of the great Luminaries of Heaven: *1 Cor. xv. 41, 42.* *There is one Glory of the Sun, another Glory of the Moon, and another Glory of the Stars; for one Star differs from another in Glory: so also is the Resurrection of the Dead.*

The Prophet *Daniel* led the Way to this Description, and the same Spirit taught the Apostle the same Language: *Dan. xii. 2, 3.* *And many of them, that sleep in the Dust of the Earth, shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame and everlasting Contempt; and they that be wise shall shine, with common Glory, as the Brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, shall have a peculiar Lustre as the Stars, for ever and ever.* And if there be a Difference in the visible Glories of the Saints at the Resurrection, if those who turn many to Righteousness shall sparkle, in that Day, with brighter Beams than those who are only wise for their own Salvation; the same Reason leads us to believe a Difference of spiritual Glory in the State of separate Spirits, when the Recompence of their Labours is begun.

So, 1 Cor. iii. 8. *He that planteth, and he that watereth, are one, and every Man shall receive his own Reward according to his own Labour.* If all be rewarded alike, the Apostle would not have said, *each Man shall receive according to his own Labour.* Surely since there is a Distinction of Labours, there will be a Distinction of Rewards too.

And it is with this View that the same Apostle exhorts the *Corinthians*, 1 Epist. xv. ult. *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.* Now that great Labour and Diligence, that Stedfastness in Profession, and that Zeal in Practice, to which the Apostle exhorts them, might seem to be in vain, if those who were far less laborious, less zealous, and less stedfast, should obtain an equal Recompence.

'Tis upon the same Principle that he encourages them to holy Patience under afflictive Trials, 2 Cor. iv. 17. when he says, *Our light Affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory; while we look not to the Things that are seen, and temporal, but to the Things invisible and eternal.* Now if the Saint, who was called to Heaven almost as soon as he was made a Christian, and went thro' no Sufferings, should possess the same Weight of Glory with the Martyrs and Confessors, under the long and tedious Train of Cruelties which they sustained from Men, or painful Trials from the Hand of God; I cannot see how *their Afflictions* could be said to *work for them a far more exceeding Weight of Glory.*

He urges them also to great Degrees of Liberality from the same Motive; 2 Cor. ix. 6. *This I say, he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly;*

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ringly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall also reap bountifully. Which Words may reasonably be construed to signify the Blessings of the Life to come, as well as the Blessings of the present Life; for this Apostle, speaking of the same Duty of *Liberality*, expresses the same Encouragement under the same Metaphors; *Gal. vi. 6, 7, 8, 9.* *Let him, that is taught in the Word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap: For he that soweth to his Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life Everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due Season we shall reap, if we faint not.* When God distributes the Riches of his Glory amongst the Saints in Heaven, he pours them out in a large and bountiful Manner upon those who have distributed the good Things of this Life bountifully to the Poor; but he rewards the narrow-soul'd Christian with a more sparing Hand.

With the same Design does the Apostle encourage Christians to great *Watchfulness* against Sin and Heresy, as well as Ministers to a solicitous Care of their Doctrine and Preaching; *1 Cor. iii. 12, 13, 14, 15.* *If any Man build Gold, Silver, or precious Stones upon the true Foundation Jesus Christ, and raise a glorious Superstructure of Truth and Holiness, he shall receive a Reward answerable to his Skill and Care in Building; for his Work shall stand, when it is try'd by the Fire of the Judgment-Day: But if he build Wood, Hay, and Stubble upon it, evil Inferences, and corrupt Practices, or Trifles, fruitless Controversies, idle Speculations, and vain Ceremonies, his Works shall be burnt, and he shall suffer Loss, shall obtain a far less Recompence of his*

Labour: Yet, since he has laid *Christ* for the *Foundation*, and has taught and practis'd the fundamental Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, tho' mingled with much Folly and Weakness, *he himself shall be saved*; yet in so hazardous a Manner as a Man that is *saved by Fire*, who loses all his Goods, and just escapes with his Life.

When you hear St. *Paul*, or St. *John*, speaking of the last Judgment, they give Hints of the same Distinction of Rewards, 2 Cor. v. 10. *For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Eph. vi. 8. *Whatsoever good thing any Man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be Bond or Free.* Rev. xxii. 12. *And behold, I come quickly; and my Reward is with me, to give every Man according as his Work shall be.* Tho' the highest and holiest Saint in Heaven can claim nothing there by the way of Merit (for 'tis our Lord *Jesus Christ* alone, who has purchased all those unknown Blessings) yet he will distribute them according to the different Characters and Degrees of Holiness which his Saints possess'd on Earth; and those larger Degrees of Holiness were also the free Gift of God our Saviour.

I have often represented it to my own Thoughts under this Comparison. Here's a *Race* appointed; here are a thousand different *Prizes*, purchas'd by some *Prince* to be bestow'd on the *Racers*: And the Prince himself gives them Food and Wine, according to what proportion he pleases, to strengthen and animate them for the Race. Each has a particular *Stage* appointed for him; some of shorter, and some of longer Distance. When every Racer comes to his own Goal, he receives

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receives a *Prize* in most exact proportion to his Speed, Diligence, and Length of *Race*: And the Grace and the Justice of the *Prince* shine gloriously in such a Distribution. Not the foremost of the *Racers* can pretend to have merited the *Prize*; for the Prizes were all paid for by the *Prince* himself; and 'twas he that appointed the Race, and gave them Spirit and Strength to run: and yet there is a most equitable *Proportion* observ'd in the *Reward*, according to the *Labours of the Race*. Now this Similitude represents the Matter so agreeably to the Apostle's way of speaking, when he compares the *Christian Life* to a *Race*, 1 Cor. xi. 24, &c. Gal. v. 7. Philip. iii. 14. 2. Tim. iv. 7. Heb. xii. 1. that I think it may be call'd almost a scriptural Description of the present Subject.

The Reason of Man, and the Light of Nature, intirely concur with Scripture in this Point. The Glory of Heaven is prepared for those who are prepared for it in a State of Grace, *Rom. ix. 23.* It is God who *makes each of us meet for our own Inheritance among the Saints in Light*, Col. i. 12. and then he bestows on us that Inheritance. As Grace fits the Soul for Glory, so a larger Degree of Grace advances and widens the Capacity of the Soul, and prepares it to receive a larger Degree of Glory. The Work of Grace is but the *Means*, the Reward of Glory is the *End*: Now the Wisdom of God always fits and adjusts the Means in a due Proportion to answer the *End* he designs; and the same Wisdom ever makes the *End* answerable to the *Means* he useth; and therefore he infuses more and higher Glories into Vessels more enlarged and better prepar'd.

Some of the Spirits in Heaven may be train'd up by their Stations and sacred Services on Earth for more elevated Employments and Joys on high. Can we imagine that the Soul of *David*, the sweet *Psalmist*, the Prophet, and the King of *Israel*, is not fitted by all his Labours and Trials, all his Raptures of Faith, and Love, and Zeal, for some sublimer Devotion and nobler Business than his own Infant Child, the Fruit of his Adultery. And yet our Divines have generally placed this Child in Heaven, because *David* ceased to mourn for him at his Death, and said, that *he himself should go to him?* 2 Sam. xii. 20, 23. *Deborah*, the Prophetess, judged *Israel*, she animated their Armies, and sung their Victories: Is not *Deborah* engaged in some more illustrious Employment among the heavenly Tribes, than good *Dorcas* may seem to be capable of, whose highest Character upon record is, that she *was full of Alms-Deeds, and made Coats and Garments for the Poor?* Acts ix. 36, 39. And yet perhaps *Dorcas* is prepared too for some greater Enjoyments, some sweeter Relish of Mercy, or some special Taste of the divine Goodness above *Rahab* the Harlot; *Rahab*, whose younger Character was lewd and infamous, and the best Thing that we read of her is, that her Faith under the present Terror of the Armies of *Israel* taught her once to cover and conceal their Spies: And unless she made great Advances afterward in Grace, surely her Place is not very high in Glory.

The Worship of Heaven, and the Joy that attends it, may be exceedingly different in Degrees according to the different Capacity of Spirits; and yet all may be perfect and free from sinful Defects. Does not the *Sparrow* praise the Lord its Maker upon the Ridge of a Cottage, chirping in its

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its native *Perfection*? And yet the *Lark* advances in her Flight and her Song as far above the *Sparrow*, as the Clouds are above the House-top.

Surely superior Joys and Glories must belong to superior Powers and Services.

Can we think that *Abraham* and *Moses*, who were train'd up in Converse with God *face to face*, as a Man converses with his Friend, and who follow'd him thro' the Wilderness and unknown Countries in a glorious Exercise of Faith, were not prepar'd for a greater Intimacy with God, and nearer Views of his Glory in Heaven, than *Sampson* and *Jephthah* those rude Heroes, who being appointed of God for that Service, spent their Days in bloody Work, in hewing down the *Philistines* and the *Ammonites*? For we read little of their Acquaintance with God, or Converse with him, beside a Petition now and then, or a Vow for Victory and for Slaughter; and we should hardly have Charity enough to believe they were saved, if *St. Paul* had not placed them among the Examples of Faith in his eleventh Chapter to the *Hebrews*. Can we ever believe that the Thief upon the Cross, who spent his Life in Plundering and Mischief, and made a single tho' sincere Profession of the Name of *JESUS* just in his dying Hour, was prepared for the same high Station and Enjoyment in Paradise, so near the right hand of Christ, as the great Apostle *Paul*, whose Prayers and Sermons, whose Miracles of Labour and Suffering filled up and finished a long Life, and honoured his Lord and Saviour more than all the twelve Apostles besides? Can we imagine that the Child that is just born into this World under the friendly Shadow of the Covenant of Grace, and weeps and dies, and is taken to Heaven, is fit to be Possessor of the same Glories, or rais'd to the same Degree there,

as the studious, the laborious, and the zealous Christian, that has lived above fourscore Years on Earth, and spent the greatest Part of his Life in the Studies of Religion, the Exercises of Piety, and the zealous and painful Services of God and his Country? Surely, if all these which I have named must have equal Knowledge and Joy in the future World, it is hard to find how such an exact Equity shall be display'd in the Distribution of final Rewards, as the Word of God so frequently describes.

Object. But in the Parable of the *Labourers hired to work in the Vineyard*, Mat. xx. 9.---12. does not every Man receive his Penny, they who were called at the first and third Hour, and they who were called at the last? Were not their Rewards all equal, those who had wrought but one Hour, and those who had borne the Burden and Heat of the Day?

Ans. It is not the Design of this Parable to represent the final Rewards of the Saints at the Day of Judgment, but to shew that the Nation of the Jews, who had been called to be the People of God above a thousand Years before, and had borne the Burthen and Heat of the Day, i. e. the Toil and Bondage of many Ceremonies, should have no Preference in the Esteem of God above the Gentiles who were called at the last Hour, or at the End of the Jewish Dispensation; for it is said, v. 16. *the last, shall be first, and the first last*, i. e. The Gentiles, who waited long e'er the Gospel was preached to them, shall be the first in receiving it; and the Jews, to whom it was first offer'd, from an inward Scorn and Pride shall reject it, or receive it but slowly: And Christ adds this Confirmation of it, *for many be called, but few chosen*, i. e. tho' Multitude of

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of *Jews* were called to believe in Christ, that few accepted the Call.

There's another Reason why this Parable can't refer to the final Rewards of Heaven; because v. 11 'tis said, *Some of them murmur'd against the good Man of the House.* Now there shall be no Envy against their Fellow-Saints, nor Murmuring against God in the heavenly State. But the *Jews*, and even the *Jewish Converts to Christianity*, were ready often to murmur that the Gospel should be preached to the *Gentile World*, and that the *Heathens* should be brought into Privileges equal with themselves.

Thus it sufficiently appears from the frequent Declarations of Scripture, as well as from the Reason and Equity of Things, that the *Rewards of the future World shall be greatly distinguished according to the different Degrees of Holiness and Service for God*, even tho' every Spirit there shall be perfect; nor is there any just and reasonable Objection against it.

It is certain then, that Heaven has various Degrees of Happiness in it, and shall my Spirit rest contented with the meanest Place there, and the least and lowest Measure? Hast thou no sacred Ambition in thee, O my Soul, to sit down with *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*? Or dost thou not aspire at least to the middle Ranks of glorified Saints, tho' perhaps thou may'st despair of those most exalted Stations which are prepared for the Spirits of chief Renown, for *Abraham and Moses* of ancient Time, and for the Martyrs and the Apostles of the Lamb? Wilt thou not stir up all the Vigour of Nature and Grace within thee, to do great Service for thy God and thy Saviour on Earth, that thy Reward in Heaven may not be small? Wilt thou not run with *Zal* and *Patience the Race that is set before thee*, look-
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ing to the brightest Cloud of Witnesses, and reaching at some of the richer Prizes? Remember that Jesus thy Judge is coming apace: He has Rewards with him of every Size, and the Lustre and Weight of thy Crown shall most exactly correspond to thy Sweat and Labour.

But I must not dwell always on this Head: I proceed therefore to the next.

III. The Spirits of the Just in Heaven enjoy such a Perfection as is consistent with perpetual Changes of Business and Delights even in the same Person or Spirit. They may be always perfect, but in a rich and endless Variety.

'Tis only God who possesses all possible Excellencies, and Powers, and Happinesses at once, and therefore he alone is incapable of Change: But Creatures must possess and enjoy their Delights in a Succession, because they cannot possess and enjoy all that they are capable of at once. And according to this Consideration the heavenly State is represented in Scripture in various-Forms both of Business and Blessedness.

Sometimes it is described by seeing God, Mat. v. 8. by beholding him Face to Face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. by being present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 8. by being where Christ is, to behold his Glory, John xvii. 24. Sometimes the Saints above are said to serve him as his Servants, Rev. xxii. 3. Sometimes they are represented as worshipping before the Throne, as being fed with the Fruits of the Tree of Life, and drinking the living Fountains of Water, Rev. vii. 15, 17, and xxii. 1, 2. and let it be noted that twelve Manner of Fruits grew on this Tree, and they were new every Month also. Sometimes they are held forth to us as singing a new Song to God, and to the Lamb, Rev. xiv. 3. And at another Time they are described, as wearing a Crown of Righteousness and Glory,

Glory, of *sitting on the Throne of Christ, of reigning for ever and ever, and ruling the Nations with a Rod of Iron*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. 1 Pet. v. 4. Rev. xxii. 5. Rev. ii. 26, 27. And in another Place our Happiness is represented as *sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven*, Matt. viii. 11. Now surely this rich Variety of Language, whereby the heavenly State is propos'd to us in Scripture, must intend a Variety of Entertainments and Employments, that may in some measure answer the Glory of such Expressions.

'Tis not only the Powers of our Understanding that shall be regaled and feasted in those happy Regions with the blissful Vision of God and Christ, but our active Powers shall doubtless have their proper Entertainments too. When Angels are so variously and delightfully employ'd in Service for God, in his several known and unknown Worlds, we can't suppose the *Spirits of just Men* shall be eternally confin'd to a *sedentary State of unactive Contemplation*.

Contemplation indeed is a noble Pleasure, and the Joy of it rises high when 'tis fixed on the sublimest Objects, and when the Faculties are all exalted and refin'd. But surely such a Sight of God and our dear Redeemer as we shall enjoy above, will awaken and animate all the active and sprightly Powers of the Soul, and set all the Springs of Love and Zeal at work in most illustrious Instances of unknown and glorious Duty.

I confess *Heaven* is described as a Place of *Rest*, i. e. Rest from Sin and Sorrow, Rest from Pain and Weariness, Rest from all the toilsome Labours and Conflicts that we endure in a State of Trial; but it can never be such a Rest as lays all our active Powers asleep, or renders them useless in such a vital and active World. It would
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diminish the Happiness of the Saints in Glory to be unemploy'd there. Those Spirits who have tasted unknown Delight and Satisfaction in many long Seasons of Devotion, and in a thousand painful Services for their blessed Lord on Earth, can hardly bear the Thoughts of paying no active Duties, doing no Work at all for him in Heaven, where Business is all over Delight, and Labour is all Enjoyment. Surely *his Servants shall serve him* there, as well as *worship him*. They shall serve him perhaps as *Priests* in his Temple, and as *Kings*, or *Viceroy*s in his wide Dominions; for they are made *Kings and Priests unto God* for ever, *Rev. v. 10.*

But let us dwell a little upon their active Employments, and perhaps a close and attentive Meditation may lead us into an unexpected View and Notice of their sacred *Commissions* and *Embassies*, their *Governments*, and their *holy Conferences*, as well as their Acts of *Worship* and *Adoration*.

That Heaven is a Place or State of Worship, is certain, and beyond all Controversy; for this is a very frequent Description of it in the Word of God. And as the great God has been pleas'd to appoint different Forms of Worship to be practis'd by his Saints and his Churches under the different *OEconomies of his Grace*; so 'tis possible he may appoint *peculiar Forms* of sacred Magnificence to attend his own Worship in the *State of Glory*. Bowing the Knee, and Prostration of the Body, are Forms and Postures of Humility practis'd by earthly Worshipers. Angels cover their Faces and their Feet with their Wings, and cry, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!* *Isa. vi. 2, 3.* But what unknown and illustrious Forms shall be consecrated by the Appointment and Authority of *Christ*, for the unbody'd or the body'd Saints in Heaven to adorn their sacred Offices,

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Let us consider now what Parts of *Worship* the Blessed are employ'd in.

The various Parts of *divine Worship* that are practis'd on Earth, at least such as are included in Natural Religion, shall doubtless be perform'd in Heaven too; and what other unknown *Worship* of positive and celestial Appointment shall belong to the heavenly State, is as much above our present Conjecture, as the Forms of it are.

Heaven is represented as full of Praises. There is the most glorious and perfect Celebration of God the Father and the Saviour in the upper World: And the highest Praise is offered to them with the deepest Humility.

The Crowns of Glory are cast down at their Feet, and all the Powers and Perfections of God, with all his Labours of Creation, his Cares of Providence, and the sweeter Mysteries of his Grace, shall furnish noble Matter for divine Praise.

This Work of Praise is also exhibited in Scripture, as attended with a *Song* and *heavenly Melody*. What there is in the World of separate Spirits to answer the Representations of *Harps* and *Voices*, we know not. 'Tis possible that Spirits may be capable of some sort of Harmony in their Language, without a Tongue, and without an Ear, and there may be some inimitable and transporting Modulations of divine Praise without the material Instruments of String or Wind. The Soul itself by some Philosophers is said to be meer Harmony; and surely then it will not wait for it till the Body be rais'd from the Dust, nor live so long destitute of all melodious Joys, or of that spiritual Pleasure which shall supply the Place of
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of Melody, till our Organs of Sense shall be restored to us again.

But is all Heaven made up of Praises? Is there no Prayer there? Let us consider a little: What is Prayer, but the *Desire of a created Spirit in an humble Manner made known to its Creator*? Does not every Saint above desire to know God, to love and serve him, to be employ'd for his Honour, and to enjoy the eternal Continuance of his Love and its own Felicity? May not each happy Spirit in Heaven exert these Desires in a way of solemn Address to the divine Majesty? May not the happy Soul acknowledge its Dependence in this manner upon its Father and its God? Is there no Place in the Heart of a glorified Saint for such humble Addresses as these? Does not every separate Spirit there look and long for the Resurrection, when 'tis certain that embodied Spirits on Earth *who have received the first Fruits of Grace and Glory groan within themselves, waiting for the Redemption of the Body*? Rom. viii. 23. And may we not suppose each holy Soul sending a sacred and fervent Wish after this glorious Day, and lifting up a Desire to its God about it, tho' without the Uneasiness of a Sigh or a Groan? May it not under the Influence of divine Love breathe out the Requests of its Heart, and the Expressions of its Zeal for the Glory and Kingdom of Christ? May not the Church above join with the Churches below in this Language, *Father, thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven*? Are not the Souls of the Martyrs that were slain, represented to us as *under the Altar, crying with a loud Voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true*? Rev. vi. 9, 10. This looks like the Voice of Prayer in Heaven.

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Perhaps you will suppose there is no such Service as hearing Sermons, that there's no Attendance upon the Word of God there. But are we sure there are no such Entertainments? Are there no Lectures of divine Wisdom and Grace given to the younger Spirits there, by Spirits of a more exalted Station? Or may not our Lord Jesus Christ himself be the everlasting Teacher of his Church? May he not at solemn Seasons summon all Heaven to hear him publish some new and surprizing Discoveries, which have never yet been made known to the Ages of Nature, or of Grace, and are reserv'd to entertain the Attention, and exalt the Pleasure of Spirits advanced to Glory? Must we learn all by the meer Contemplation of Christ's Person? Does he never make use of Speech to the Instruction and Joy of Saints above?

Moses and Elijah came down once from Heaven to make a visit to Christ on Mount *Tabor*, and the Subject of their Converse with him was his *Death and Departure from this World*, Luke ix. 31. Now since our Lord is ascended to Heaven, are these holy Souls cut off from this divine Pleasure? Is Jesus for ever silent? Does he converse with his glorify'd Saints no more? And surely if he speak, the Saints will hear and attend.

Or it may be that our blessed Lord (even as he is Man) has some noble and unknown way of communicating a long Discourse, or a long Train of Ideas and Discoveries to Millions of blessed Spirits at once, without the Formalities of Voice and Language; and at some peculiar Seasons he may thus instruct and delight his Saints in Heaven.

Thus

Thus it appears there may be something among the Spirits of the Just above that is analogous to *Prayer* and *Preaching*, as well as *Praise*.

O how gussful are the Pleasures of Celestial Worship! What unknown Varieties of Performance, what sublime Ministrations there are, and glorious Services, none can tell. And in all this Variety, which may be perform'd in sweet Succession, there's no wandring Thought, no cold Affection, no divided Heart, no listless or indifferent Worshipper. What we call *Rapture* and *Extasy* here on Earth, is perhaps the constant and uninterrupted Pleasure of the Church on high in all their Adorations.

But let the Worship of the glorify'd Spirits be never so various, yet I cannot persuade my self that meer direct Acts or Exercises of what we properly call *Worship*, are their only and everlasting Work.

The Scripture tells us, there are certain Seasons when the Angels, those *Sons of God*, come to present themselves before the Lord, Job i. 6. and ii. 1. 'Tis evident then, that the Intervals of these Seasons are spent in other Employments: And when they present themselves before God, it does not sufficiently appear that meer Adoration and Praise is their only Business at the Throne. In the very Place which I have cited, it seems more natural to suppose that these *angelick Spirits* came thither rather to render an Account of their several Employments, and the Successes of their Messages to other Worlds. And why may we not suppose such a blessed Variety of Employment among the Spirits of Men too?

This Supposition has some Countenance in the holy Scripture. The Angel or Messenger who appeared to St. *John*, and shew'd him various Visions,

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sions, by the Order of Christ, forbids the Apostle *to worship him*, for *I am thy Fellow-servant* (said he) and *of thy Brethren the Prophets, and of them which keep the Sayings of this Book*, Rev. xxii. 8. 9. These Words naturally lead one to think, that tho' he appeared as a Messenger from Christ, and in the Form of an Angel, yet he was really a departed Saint, a Brother, a Fellow-Prophet, perhaps the Soul of *David*, or *Isaiah*, or *Moses*, who would count it an Honour even in their State of Glory, to be thus employed by their exalted Lord; and they also keep or observe and wait for the Accomplishment of *the Sayings of that Book of the Revelations*, as well as the Churches of their Brethren, the Saints on Earth.

I freely allow immediate *Divine Worship* to take up a good Part of their everlasting Day, their Sabbath; and therefore I suppose them to be often engag'd, Millions at once, in social Worship; and sometimes acting apart, and rais'd in sublime Meditation of God, or in a fixed Vision of his blissful Face, with an Act of secret Adoration, while their intellectual Powers are almost lost in sweet Amazement. Sometimes they are entertaining themselves and their Fellow-Spirits with the Graces and Glories of the Man *Christ Jesus*, the *Lamb that was slain in the midst of the Throne*: But at other times they may be making a Report to him of their faithful Execution of some divine Commission they receiv'd from him, to be fulfill'd either in Heaven, or in Earth, or in unknown and distant Worlds.

There may be other Seasons also when they are not immediately addressing the Throne, but are most delightfully engag'd in recounting to each other the wondrous Steps of Providence,
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Wisdom and Mercy, that seiz'd them from the very Borders of Hell and Despair, and brought them thro' a thousand Dangers and Difficulties to the Possession of that fair Inheritance. When the great God shall unravel the Scheme of his own Counsels, shall unfold every Part of his mysterious Conduct, and set before them the Reason of every Temptation they grappled with, and of every Sorrow they felt here on Earth, and with what divine and successful Influence they all wrought together to train them up for Heaven, what Matter of surprizing Delight and charming Conversation shall this furnish the Saints with in that blessed World? And now and then in the midst of their sacred Dialogues, by a Sympathy of Soul they shall shout together in sweet Harmony, and join their exalted Songs to him *that sits upon the Throne and to the Lamb*. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Power, to thy Wisdom, and to thine abounding Mercy, be Renown and Honour to everlasting Ages."

Nor is it improper or unpleasant to suppose that among the rest of their Celestial Conferences, they shall show each other the fair and easy Solution of those *Difficulties* and *deep Problems in Divinity*, which had exercised and perplexed them here on Earth, and divided them into little angry Parties. They shall look back with holy Shame on some of their *learned and senseless Distinctions*, and be ready to wonder sometimes what Trifles and Impertinences had engag'd them in dark and furious Disputes. Darknefs and Entanglement shall vanish at once from many of those knotty Points of Controversy, when they behold them in the Light of Heaven: And the rest of them shall be matter of delightful Instruction for superior Spirits to bestow upon those

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of lower Rank, or on Souls lately arrived at the Regions of Light.

In short, There is nothing written in the *Books of Nature*, the *Records of Providence*, or the *Sacred Volumes of Grace*, but may minister Materials at special Seasons for the holy Conference of the Saints on high. No *History* nor *Prophecy*, no *Doctrine* nor *Duty*, no *Command* nor *Promise*, nor *Threatning* in the Bible, but may recal the Thoughts of the heavenly Inhabitants, and engage them in sweet Conversation. All Things that relate to the Affairs of past Ages and past Worlds, as well as the present Regions of Light and Happiness where they dwell, may give them new Themes of Dialogue and mutual Intercourse.

And tho' we are very little acquainted, whilst we are on Earth, with any of the *Planetary Worlds* besides that which we inhabit, yet who knows how our Acquaintance may be extended hereafter amongst the Inhabitants of the *various and distant Globes*? And what frequent and swift Journeys we may take thither, when we are disincumbred of this Load of Flesh and Blood, or when our Bodies are raised again, active and swift as Sun-Beams? Sometimes we may entertain our holy Curiosity there, and find Millions of new Discoveries of Divine Power and Divine Contrivance in those unknown Regions; and bring back from thence new Lectures of Divine Wisdom, or Tidings of the Affairs of those Provinces, to entertain our Fellow-Spirits, and to give new Honours to God the Creator and the Sovereign. So a pious Traveller in our lower World visits *Africa* or both the *Indies*: At his Return he sits in a Circle of attentive Admirers, and recounts to them the wondrous Products of those Climates, and the Customs and Manners of those

those distant Countries: He gratifies their Curiosity with some foreign Varieties, and feasts their Eyes and their Ears at once: Then at the End of every Story he breaks out into holy Language, and adores the various Riches and Wisdom of God the Creator.

To proceed yet one Step further. Since there are different Degrees of Glory, we may infer a *Variety of Honours* as well as *Delights* prepared for the Spirits of the Just made perfect.

Some part of the *Happiness of Heaven* is described in Scripture by *Crowns* and *Thrones*, by *Royalty* and *Kingly Honours*: Why may we not then suppose that such Souls, whose sublimer Graces have prepared them for such Dignity and Office, may *rule the Nations*, even in a literal Sense? Why may not those Spirits that have past their Trials in Flesh and Blood, and come off Conquerors, why may they not sometimes be appointed *Visitors* and *Superintendants* over whole Provinces of intelligent Beings in lower Regions, who are yet labouring in their State of Probation? or perhaps they may be exalted to a Presidency over inferior Ranks of happy Spirits, may shine bright amongst them as the *Morning-Star*, and lead on their holy Armies to celestial Work or Worship. The Scripture itself gives us a Hint of such Employments in the Angelick World, and such Presidencies over some Parts of our World, or of their own. Do we not read of *Gabriel* and *Michael*, and their Management of the Affairs of *Persia*, and *Greece*, and *Judah*, in the Book of *Daniel*? and 'tis an Intimation of the same Hierarchy, when some superior Angel led on a Multitude of the Heavenly Host to sing an Hymn of Praise at *Bethlehem*, when the Son of God was born there, *Luke* ii. 9, 13. Now if Angels

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Angels are thus dignified, may not human Spirits unbodied have the same Office? Our Saviour, when he rewards the *faithful Servant that had gained ten Pounds*, bids him *take Authority over ten Cities*; and he that had *gained five*, had *five Cities* under his Government, *Luke xix. 17, &c.* So that this is not a meer random Thought, or a wild Invention of Fancy, but patronized by the Word of God.

Among the Pleasures and Engagements of the upper World, there shall be always something new and entertaining; for the Works and the Dominions of God are vast beyond all our Comprehension. And what a perpetual Change, what a glorious but improving Rotation of Business and Joys shall succeed one another thro' the Ages of Eternity, we shall never know till we come amongst them. This Thought leads me to the last Particular, (*viz.*)

IV. The Perfection which the blessed Spirits enjoy, *gives room for large Additions and continual Improvement.*

Their *Knowledge* and their *Joy* may be called *Perfect*, because there is no Mixture of Error or Sorrow with it; and because 'tis sufficient every Moment for the Satisfaction of present Desires, without an Uneasiness of Mind. But it may be doubted whether any Creature ever was, or ever will be so perfect, that 'tis not capable of Addition or Growth in any Excellency or Enjoyment.

The Man *Christ Jesus*, in his present glorify'd State, has not such a Perfection as this. He waits daily to see his Father's Promises fulfilled to him; he waits till *all Things are put under him*, and *his Enemies be made his actual Footstool*: But we know that *all Things are not yet put under him*, *Heb. ii. 8.* *i. e.* All the Nations are not yet subject to his

spiritual Kingdom, nor become obedient to his Gospel. As fast as his Kingdom grows on Earth, so fast his Honours and his Joys arise; and he waits still for the compleat Union of all his Members to himself the Sacred Head: he waits for the Morning of the Resurrection, when he shall be glorified in the bright and general Assembly of *his Saints*, and *admir'd in all them that believe*, 2 Thess. i. 10.

O that illustrious and magnificent Appearance! That shining Hour of *Jubilee*, when the Bodies of Millions of Saints shall awake out of the Dust, and be released from their long dark Prison! When they shall encompass and adore *Jesus* their Saviour and their God, and acknowledge their new Life and immortal State to be owing to his painful and shameful Death: When *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *David*, and all his pious Progenitors shall bow and worship *Jesus* their Son and their Lord: when the Holy Army of Martyrs, springing from the Dust with Palms of Victory in their Hands, shall ascribe their Conquests and their Triumph to the *Lamb that was slain*: When he shall present his whole Church before the Presence of his own and his Father's Glory, without Spot, and faultless, with exceeding Joy! Can we imagine that *Christ* himself, even the Man *Jesus*, in the midst of all this Magnificence and these Honours, shall feel no new Satisfaction, and have no Relish of all this Joy, above what he possess'd while his Church lay bleeding on Earth, and this illustrious Company were buried under Ground in the Chains of Death? And yet you will say *Christ* in Heaven is made perfect in Knowledge and in Joy, but his Perfection admits of Improvement.

Now if the *Head* be not above the Capacity of all Growth and Addition, surely the *Members* cannot

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cannot pretend to it. But I shall propose several more Arguments for this Truth in the following Section.

S E C T. IV.

Of the Increase of the Saints above in Knowledge, Holiness and Joy.

THAT there is, and hath been, and will be *continual Progress and Improvement* in the Knowledge and Joy of separate Souls, may be easily proved many ways, (*viz.*) from the very Nature of Human Reason itself: from the Narrowness, the Weakness and Limitation even of our intellectual Faculties in their best Estate: from the immense Variety of Objects that we shall converse about: from our peculiar Concern in some future Providences, which 'tis not likely we should know before they occur: and from the glorious new Scenes of the Resurrection.

I. We may prove the Increase of Knowledge amongst the Blessed above, *from the very Nature of Human Reason itself*, which is a Faculty of drawing Inferences, or some new Propositions and Conclusions, from Propositions or Principles which we knew before. Now surely we shall not be dispossest'd of this Power when we come to Heaven. What we learn of God there, and the Glories of his Nature, or his Works, will assist and incline us to draw Inferences for his Honour, and for our Worship of him. And if we could be supposed to have never so many Propositions or new Principles of Knowledge crowded

into our Minds at the first Entrance into Heaven, yet surely our reasoning Faculty would still be capable of making some Advance by way of Inference, or building some Superstructure upon so noble a Foundation. And who knows the intense Pleasure that will arise perpetually to a contemplative Mind, by a progressive and infinite Pursuit of Truth in this manner, where we are secure against the Danger of all Error and Mistake, and every Step we take is all Light and Demonstration.

Shall it be *objected* here, that our *Reason* shall be as it were *lost and dissolved in Intuition and immediate Sight*, and therefore it shall have no room or place in that happy World?

To this I would *reply*, That we shall have indeed much more Acquaintance with spiritual Objects by *immediate Intuition*, than we ever had here on Earth; but it does not follow thence, that we shall lose our *Reason*. Angels have *immediate Vision* of God and Divine Things; but can we suppose they are utterly incapable of *drawing an Inference*, either for the Improvement of their Knowledge, or the Direction of their Practice? When they behold any special and more curious Piece of Divine Workmanship, can they not further infer the exquisite Skill or Wisdom of the Creator? And are they not capable of concluding, that this peculiar Instance of Divine Wisdom demands an adoring Thought? Thus *Intuition* or *immediate Sight* in a Creature, does not utterly exclude and forbid the *Use of Reason*.

I *reply again*, Can it ever be imagin'd, that being released from the Body, we shall possess in one Moment, and retain thro' every Moment of Eternity, all the innumerable Ranks, and Orders, and Numbers of Propositions, Truths and Duties,

ties, that may be derived in a long Succession of Ages by the Use of our reasoning Powers? But this leads me to the second Argument, viz.

2. *The Weakness and Narrowness of Human Understandings in their best Estate,* seems to make it necessary that *Knowledge should be progressive.*

Continual Improvement in Knowledge and Delight among the *Spirits of the Just made perfect*, is necessary for the same Reason that proved their Variety of Entertainments and Pleasures, viz. Because Creatures cannot take in all the vast, the infinite Variety of Conceptions in the full Brightness and Perfection of them at once, of which they are capable in a sweet Succession. Can we ever persuade ourselves, that all the endless Train of Thoughts, and Ideas, and Scenes of Joy, that shall ever pass through the Mind of a Saint thro' the long Ages of Eternity, should be crowded into every single Mind the first Moment of its Entrance into those happy Regions? And is a *Human Mind* capacious enough to receive, and strong enough to retain such an infinite Multitude of Ideas for ever? Or is this the Manner of God's Working among his intellectual Creatures? Surely God knows our Frame, and pours in Light and Glory as we are able to bear it. Such a bright Confusion of Notions, Images and Transports, would probably overwhelm the most exalted Spirit, and drown all the noble Faculties of the Mind at once. As if a Man who was born blind, should be healed in an Instant, and should open his Eyes first against the full Blaze of the Noon-Day Sun; this would so tumultuate the Spirits, and confound the Organs of Sight, as to reduce the Man back again to his first Blindness,

and perhaps might render him incurable for ever.

3. This Argument will be much strengthen'd, if we do but take a short View of the *vast and incomprehensible Variety of Objects that may be propos'd to our Minds in the future State, and may feast our Contemplation, and improve our Joy.*

The *Blessed God* himself is an infinite Being: His Perfections and Glories are unbounded: His Wisdom, his Holiness, his Goodness, his Faithfulness, his Power and Justice, his All-sufficiency, his Self-origination, and his unfathomable Eternity, have such a Number of rich Ideas belonging to each of them, that no Creature shall ever fully understand. Yet 'tis but reasonable to believe, that he will communicate so much of himself to us by Degrees, as he sees necessary for our Business and Blessedness in that upper World. Can it be suppos'd that we should know every Thing that belongs to God all at once, which he may discover to us gradually as our Capacities improve? Can we think that an Infant-Soul that had no time for Improvement here, when it enters into Heaven shall know every Thing concerning God, that it can ever attain to thro' all the Ages of its Immortality? When a blessed Spirit has dwelt in Heaven a thousand Years, and conversed with *God and Christ, Angels and Fellow-Spirits* during all that Season, shall it know nothing more of the Nature and wondrous Properties of God than it knew the first Moment of its Arrival there? *

But

* God himself hath infinite Goodness in him, which the Creature cannot take in at once; they are taking of it eternally. The Saints see in God still things fresh, which they saw not in the Beginning of their Blessedness. Dr. T. Goodwin.

- But I add further, *The Works of God* shall doubtless be the Matter of our Search and delightful Survey, as well as the *Nature and Properties of God* himself. *His Works* are *honourable and glorious, and sought out of all that have Pleasure in them*, Psal. cxi. 2, 3. In his Works we shall read his Name, his Properties, and his Glories, whether we fix our Thoughts on *Creation* or *Providence*.

The Works of God and his *Wonders of Creation* in the known and unknown Worlds, both as to the Number, the Variety and Vastness of them, are *almost infinite*, i. e. they transcend all the Limits of our Ideas, and all our present Capacities to conceive. Now there is none of these Works of Wonder, but may administer some Entertainment to the Mind of Man, and may richly furnish him with new Matter for the Praise of God in the long Successions of Eternity.

There is scarce an *Animal* of the more compleat kind, but would entertain an *Angel* with rich Curiosities, and feed his Contemplation for an Age. What a rich and artful Structure of Flesh upon the solid and well-compacted Foundation of Bones! What curious Joints and Hinges, on which the Limbs are moved to and fro! What an unconceivable Variety of Nerves, Veins, Arteries, Fibres, and little invisible Parts, are found in every Member! What various Fluids, Blood and Juices, run thro' and agitate the innumerable slender Tubes, the hollow Strings and Strainers of the Body! What Millions of Folding-doors are fixed within, to stop those red or transparent Rivulets in their Course, either to prevent their Return backwards, or else as a Means to swell the Muscles and move the Limbs! What endless Contrivances to secure Life, to nourish

Nature, and to propagate the same to future Animals! What amazing Lengths of holy Meditation would an *Angel* run upon these Subjects! And what sublime Strains of Praise would a *heavenly Philosopher* raise hourly to the Almighty and All-wise Creator! And all this from the meer *brutal World*!

But if we survey the *Nature of Man*, he is a Creature made up of *Mind and Animal* united, and would furnish still more numerous and exalted Materials for Contemplation and Praise; for he has all the richest Wonders of *Animal Nature* in him, besides the unknown Mysteries of *Mind* or *Spirit*. Surely it will create a sacred Pleasure in happy Souls above, to learn the Wonders of Divine Skill exerted and shining in their own Formation, and in the curious Workmanship of those bodily Engines in which they once dwelt and acted.

Then let them descend to Herbs and Plants. How numerous are all the Products of *Earth* upon her green *Surface*, and all within her dark *Bowels*! All the *Vegetable* and the *Mineral Kingdoms*! How many Centuries would all these entertain a heavenly Enquirer!

The Worlds of *Air*, and the Worlds of *Water*, the *Planetary* and the *Starry Worlds*, are still new Objects rich with Curiosities; these are all Monuments of Divine Wisdom, and fit Subjects for the Contemplation of the Blessed. Nor can we be supposed to have for ever done with them all when we leave this Body; and that for *two Reasons*. *One* is, because God has never yet received the Honour due to his Wisdom and Power, display'd in the material Creation, from the Hands or Tongues of Men. And the *other* is, because the Spirits of the Just shall be joined to Bodies again, and then they shall certainly

tainly have *necessary Converse with God's material Works and Worlds*; tho' perhaps they have more Acquaintance with them now in *their separate State*, than we are apprized of.

And besides all these Material Works of God, what an unknown Variety of other Wonders belong to the *World of pure Spirits*, which lie hid from us, and are utterly concealed behind the Veil of Flesh and Blood! What are their Natures, and the Reach of their Powers! What Ranks and Orders they are distributed into! What are their Governments, their several Employments, the different Customs and Manners of Life in the various and most extensive Regions of that intellectual World! What are their Messages to our Earth, or the other habitable Globes, and what Capacities they are endow'd with to move or influence animate or inanimate Bodies! All these, and a Thousand more of the like Nature, are made known doubtless to the Inhabitants of Heaven. These are Things that belong to the Provinces of Light and Immortality, but many of them are Mysteries to us who dwell in these Tabernacles; they lie far beyond our Ken, and are wrapt up in Sacred Darkness, that we can hardly do so much as shoot a Guess at them.

Now can we suppose that the meanest Spirit in Heaven has a full and entire Survey of all these innumerable Works of God, from the first Moment of its Entrance thither, throughout all the Ages of Immortality, without the Change of one Idea, or the Possibility of any Improvement? This would be to give a sort of *Omniscience* to every happy Spirit, which is more than is generally allowed to the Man Christ Jesus. And if there be such a Thing as Degrees of Glory among

mong the Saints above, we may be well assured that the lowest Rank of blessed Spirits is not advanced to this amazing Degree.

Is there no *new thing*, neither *under* nor *above the Sun*, that God can entertain any of his Children within the upper World, throughout the infinite Extent of all future Ages? Are they all made at once so much like God, as to know all Things? Or if each of them have their stinted Size of Knowledge, and their limited Number of Ideas at their first Release from the Body, then they are everlastingly cut off from all the Surprises of Pleasure that arise from new Thoughts, and new Scenes, and new Discoveries. Does every Saint in Heaven read *God's great Volume of Nature* thro' and thro' the first Hour it arrives there? Or is each Spirit confined to a certain *Number of Leaves*, and bound eternally to learn nothing new, but to review perpetually his own limited Lesson? Dares he not, or can he not turn over *another Leaf*, and read his Creator's Name in it, and adore his Wisdom in new Wonders of Contrivance? These Things are improbable to such a high Degree, that I dare almost pronounce them untrue.

The *Book of Providence* is another Volume wherein God writes his Name too. Has every single Saint such a vast and infinite Length of Foreknowledge given him at his first Admission into Glory, that he knows beforehand all the future Scenes of Providence, and the Wonders which God shall work in the upper and lower Worlds? I thought the *Lion of the Tribe of Judah*, the *Root and the Offspring of David*, had been the only Person in Heaven or Earth that was *worthy to take the Book, and to loose the seven Seals thereof*, Rev. v. 5. Surely the
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meanest of the Saints does not foreknow all those great and important Counsels of God, which our Lord Jesus Christ is intrusted with. And yet we may venture to say, that the Spirits of the Just in Heaven shall know those great Events that relate to the Church on Earth, as they arise in successive Seasons, that they may give to God and to his Son Jesus Christ Revenues of due Honour upon this Account, as I shall prove immediately.

And indeed if the Limits of their Knowledge in Heaven were so fixed at their first Entrance there, that they could never be acquainted with any of these successive Providences of God afterwards, we here on Earth have a great Advantage above them, who see daily the Accomplishment of his Divine Counsels, and adore the Wonders of his Wisdom and his Love; and from this daily Increase of Knowledge, we take our share in the growing Joys and Blessings of Zion.

But this Thought leads me to the fourth Argument for the *Increase of Knowledge in Heaven.*

4. There have been, and there are many future *Providences on Earth, and Transactions in Heaven, in which the Spirits of the Just have a very great and dear Concernment, and therefore they must know them when they come to pass; and yet it is by no means probable, that they are known in all their glorious Circumstances beforehand by every Spirit in Heaven.*

Let us descend a little to some particular Instances, and see whether we cannot make it appear from Scripture with most convincing Evidence, that the Saints in Heaven obtain some Additions to their Knowledge, by the various new Transactions in Heaven and in Earth.

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When our Blessed Lord had fulfilled his State of *Sorrows* and *Sufferings* on Earth, and ascended into Heaven in his glorify'd Human Nature, with all the Scars of Honour, and the Ensigns of Victory about him; when the *Lamb* appeared in the midst of the *Throne* with the Marks of *Slaughter* and *Death* upon him, and presented himself before God in the midst of Angels and ancient Patriarchs, with the Accomplishment of all the Types and Promises about him written in Letters of Blood; did not those blessed Angels, did not the *Spirits* of those Patriarchs, learn something more of the Mysteries of our Redemption, and the wondrous Glories of the *Redeemer*, than what they were acquainted with before? And did not this new glorious *Scene* spread new Ideas, new Joys and Wonders through all the heavenly World? Can the Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places gain by the Church on Earth any farther Discoveries of the manifold *Wisdom of God*? Eph. iii. 10. And can we believe that when Christ, the Head of the Church, entered into Heaven in so illustrious a manner, that these Powers, Principalities and *blessed Spirits*, got no brighter Discoveries of Divine Wisdom? To what purpose do they look and pry into these things, 1 Pet. i. 12. if after all their Searches they make no Advances in Knowledge? And must Angels be the only Proficients in these sublime Sciences, while *Human Spirits* make no Improvement? Can it be supposed that those ancient Fathers, *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, to whom the Promises were made, that *all the Nations should be blessed in their Seed*, had no transporting Pleasures, when they first beheld that *promised Seed* crown'd with all his Glory? When they saw their *Son Jesus* ascending on high, and leading

leading Captivity captive, and the *Chariots* of God that attended him were twenty thousand, even an innumerable Company of Angels, *Psal.* lxxviii. 17, 18.

If upon this Occasion we may talk in the Language of Mortals, may we not suppose those ancient Fathers raising themselves on high, and overlooking the Walls of Paradise, to gaze downward upon this ascending Triumph? May we not imagine them speaking thus to each other in the holy Transport? "And is this our great
" Descendant? Is this our long-expected Off-
" spring? How divine his Aspect? How God-
" like his Air? How glorious and adorable all
" the Graces of his Countenance? Is this (saith
" holy David) my Son and my Lord? the King of
" Glory, for whose Admission I cailed the Gates
" of Heaven to be lifted up, and opened the ever-
" lasting Doors for him in an ancient Song? Is
" this the Man, whose Hands and whose Feet
" they pierced on Earth, as I once foretold by the
" Spirit of Prophecy? I see those blessed Scars
" of Honour; How they adorn his glorify'd
" Limbs! I acknowledge and adore my God
" and my Saviour. I begun his Triumph once
" on my Harp in a lower Strain, and I behold
" him now ascending on high. Awake my Glo-
" ry, he comes, He comes with the Sound of a
" Trumpet, and with the Pomp of shouting An-
" gels; sing Praises, all ye Saints, unto our God,
" sing Praises, sing Praises unto our King, sing
" Praises. Is this, saith Isaiah, the Child born,
" of whom I spoke? Is this the Son given, of
" whom I prophesied? I adore him as the Migh-
" ty God, the Father of Ages, and the Prince of
" Peace. I see the Righteous Branch, adds the
" Prophet Jeremy, the Righteous Branch from
" the

" the Stem of *David*, from the Root of *Jesse*.
 " This is the *King* whom I foretold should reign in
 " *Righteousness*: The Lord my *Righteousness*, is
 " his Name, I rejoice at his Appearance, the
 " Throne of Heaven is made ready for him.
 " This (saith *Daniel*) is the *Messiah the Prince*,
 " who was cut off, but not for himself: The se-
 " venty Weeks are all fulfill'd, and the Work is
 " done. He hath finished *Transgression*, and made
 " an end of *Sin*, and hath brought in everlasting
 " *Righteousness* for all his People. But was this
 " the Person (saith *Zachary* the Prophet) whom
 " they sold for thirty Pieces of Silver? Vile In-
 " dignity and impious Madness! Behold he now
 " appears like the *Man who is Fellow*, or *Com-*
 " *panion to the Lord of Hosts*. It is he (saith
 " *Malachi*) it is he, the *Messenger of the Cove-*
 " *nant*, who came suddenly to his own Temple.
 " There I held him in my wither'd Arms, (saith
 " aged *Simeon*) and Rapture and Prophecy came
 " upon me at once, and I expired in Joy and
 " Praises.

And we hope our Mother *Eve* stood up a-
 mong the rest of them, and beheld and confessed
 the promised *Seed of the Woman*. " O Blessed
 " *Saviour* that didst break the Head of the *Serpent*,
 " though thy Heel was bruised, and hast abolished
 " the Mischief that my Folly and his Temptation
 " had brought into thy new-created World!"

Now could we ever suppose all this to be done
 in the upper Regions, with no new Smiles
 upon the Countenances of the Saints, no special
 Increase of Joy among the Spirits of the Just
 made perfect? God himself stands in no need
 of the Magnificence of these Transactions: Christ
 Jesus receives the new Honours, and all the old
 Inhabitants of Heaven taste new and unknown
 Satisf-

Satisfaction in the Honours they pay to their exalted Saviour.

Some of the Antients were of Opinion, that the *Souls of the Fathers before the Ascension of Christ were not admitted into the Holy of Holies, or the Blissful Vision of God*; but that it was our Lord *Jesus*, our great High Priest at his Ascent to the Throne, led the Way thither: he rent the Veil of the lower Heaven, and carried with him the Armies of Patriarchal Souls into some upper and brighter, and more joyful Regions, whereas before they were only admitted into a State of Peace and Rest. Whether this be so or no, the Scripture does not sufficiently declare: But whatsoever Region of Heaven they were placed in, we may be well assured from the very Nature of Things, that such Transactions as the triumphant Ascent of *Christ*, could never pass thro' any of the upper Worlds without enlarging the Knowledge and the Joy of the blessed Inhabitants.

When our Lord *Jesus Christ* sat down at the Right-hand of God, he *prevailed to open the Book* of divine Counsels and Decrees, *Rev. v. 5.* and to acquaint himself with all the Contents: And this was necessary, that he might manage and govern the Affairs of the Church and the World in the several successive Ages according to the Counsels of the Father. He therefore, and he alone among Creatures, knows the End from the Beginning, as I hinted before. But as the Seals of this Book are opened by Degrees, and the Counsels of God are executed in the lower World, doubtless the Angels that are Ministers of the Providence of *Christ*, carry Tidings to Heaven of all the greater Changes that relate to the Church; and *Jesus the Son of God, the King of Saints and of Nations*, receives the Shouts and Honours of the

the heavenly World, as fast as the joyful Tidings arrive thither.

Nor is this spoken by meer Conjecture, for the Scripture informs us of the Certainty of it. We have frequent Accounts in the *Book of Revelations*, of new special Honours that were paid to him that sits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb at certain special Periods of Time.

When he first took upon him the Execution of his Father's Decrees, *The living Creatures and Elders fell down before the Lamb, and they sung a new Song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the Seals thereof; and ten thousand times ten thousand Angels eccho'd to the Song with a loud Voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, &c.* Rev. v. 8, 9, 11. So when the *Servants of God were sealed in their Foreheads*, the innumerable Multitude of Saints shouted *Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb*, Rev. vii. 3, 9, 10. So when the *seventh Angel sounded*, there were great Voices in Heaven, saying, *The Kingdoms of this World are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever; and the four and twenty Elders fell upon their Faces, and worshipped and gave Thanks*, Rev. xi. 15, 16. Again when the *old Dragon and his Angels were cast out of Heaven*, there was a loud Voice, saying, *Now is come Salvation and Strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of his Christ; for the Accuser of our Brethren is cast down*: Rev. xii. 9, 10. So upon the *Fall of Babylon*, Ch. xiv. and the *Victory of the Saints*, Ch. xv. and the *final Destruction of Antichrist*, Ch. xix. there are new Honours done by the Saints to God the Father and his Son Jesus. There are new Songs address'd to them at these surprizing
Revolutions

Revolutions on Earth, these wondrous Turns of Judgment on the World, and Mercy to the Church; all which supposes that the heavenly Inhabitants are acquainted with them, and thus their Knowledge and their Joys increase.

Object. But does not the Prophet *Ijaiah* say in the Name of the Church of *Israel*, *Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not?* *Ila.* lxiii. 16.

Ans. 1. The Words *Knowledge* and *Acknowledgment* often signify a friendly and beneficial Care manifested in special Acts of Kindness and Benefits conferred. Therefore the Tribe of *Levi* is said *neither to have seen his Father or his Mother, nor to acknowledge his Brethren, nor to know his own Children,* *Deut.* xxxiii. 9. because the Sons of *Levi* slew every Man his Brother, and every Man his Neighbour, to execute the Vengeance of the Lord upon them, *Ex.* xxxii. 26--29. So *Abraham* and *Israel*, in Heaven, in the same Sense know not their Posterity on Earth, when they approve of the Anger of God let out upon them, and afford them no Defence. This Interpretation perfectly agrees with the Context. But it does not follow that *Abraham* and *Israel* were utterly unacquainted with all the greater Events of Providence towards the *Jewish Nation*, tho' perhaps they might not know the lesser and more minute Circumstances of their Afflictions or their Deliverances.

Ans. 2. If we could suppose that the Souls of the antient Patriarchs were ignorant of the Affairs of their Posterity before the Coming of the *Messiah*, yet since *Christ* in our Nature now dwells in the midst of them, and has taken the Book of Divine Counsels into his own Hands, since the great *God-Man* rules all Things in the upper and the lower Worlds, 'tis not probable that

that *Abraham* and *Israel* are so ignorant of the Affairs of the Church, as they were in the Days of *Isaiah*.

And not only the *greater and more extensive Dispensations* that attend the Church on Earth, are made known to the *Spirits of the Just made perfect*; but even some *lesser and particular Concerns* are very probably revealed to them also.

Is it not said, that *when one Sinner on Earth repents, there is Joy among the Angels in Heaven?* Luke xv. 7, 10. For every such Convert is a new Trophy of Divine Grace. And when the Spirits of the Just in Heaven shall in successive Seasons behold one and another of their old Relatives and Acquaintance on Earth entering in at the Gates, and received into Heaven, can we imagine there's no new Joy amongst them? Do the Pleasures of *Angels* increase when they see a Man brought into the State of Grace, and shall not the *Souls of Men* testify their Exultation and Delight, when they see one of their Fellow-Souls, perhaps a dear and inward Friend, translated to the State of Glory? Surely every Increase of that happy World shall diffuse increasing Joy thro' the Holy Ones that dwell in it; and those shall have the sweetest Taste of this Joy, that had the dearest Concern in it. O the transporting and celestial Gratulations that pass between two Souls of intimate Endearment at their first Meeting there!

The *last Argument* that I shall use, and 'tis also the *last Instance* I shall mention, wherein the Knowledge and the Pleasure of glorify'd Saints must receive Addition and Improvement, is, *The Great Resurrection-Day*.

The

The Spirits of Men are formed on purpose for Union with Bodies, and if they could attain compleat Happiness in the highest Degree without them, what need would there be of new creating their Bodies from the Dust? Upon this Supposition the *Resurrection* itself must seem to be *almost in vain*. But it is evident from the Word of God, that the Spirits of the Just, with all the Perfections that belong to a separate State, wait yet for greater Perfection when their Bodies shall be restored to them; for as they suffer'd Pain and Agony in the Body, they shall have a Recompence of Pleasure in the Body too. *All the Days of their appointed Time they wait till this blessed Change shall come*, Job. xiv. 14. God shall call, and the Dust of the Saints shall answer: God the Creator will have a Desire again to the Work of his own Hands, ver. 15. and the happy Souls will have a Desire to be rejoin'd to their old Companions.

O glorious Hour! O blessed Meeting-time! A magnificent and divine Spectacle, worthy to attract the Eyes of all the Creation! When the long-divided Parts of Human Nature shall be united with unknown Powers and Glories! When these Bodies shall be called out of their long dark Dungeon, all fashioned a-new, and all new dress'd in Immortality and Sun-beams! When these Spirits shall assume and animate their Limbs again, exulting in new Life and everlasting Vigour!

Now can we suppose it possible that all this vast and amazing Change shall be made by the Conflagration of the Earth and the lower Heavens, by the awful and illustrious Splendors and Solemnities of the last Judgment; by the Bodies of Millions of Saints and Sinners rising into a painful or joyful Immortality, and yet no new Ideas

deas hereby communicated to the happy Spirits; no Increase of their Knowledge, or Improvement of their Joys?

Shall the *Apostles* and the *Prophets*, the *Confessors* and the *Martyrs*, stand at the Right-hand of *Christ*, and be owned and acknowledged by him with divine Applause in the Sight of the whole Creation, and yet have no new Transports of Pleasure running thro' their Souls? shall they be absolved and approved by the Voice of God, with Thousands of applauding Angels, in the Face of Heaven, Earth and Hell, and all this without any Advancement of their Knowledge, or their Blessedness? Shall St. *Paul* meet the *Thessalonian* Converts in the Presence of his Lord *Jesus*, those Souls who were once his Labour and his Hope, and shall they not at that Day appear to be *his Glory and his Joy*? Does not he himself tell them so in his first Epistle, *chap. ii. ver. 19, 20*? And can we believe that he or they shall be disappointed? Shall that *Great Apostle* see the immense Fruits of his Labours, the large Harvest of Souls which he gathered from many Provinces of *Europe* and *Asia*, all appearing at once in their Robes of Light and Victory, and shall he feel no new inward Exultations of Spirit at such a Sight? And doubtless many thousand Souls, whom he never knew on Earth, shall be made known to him at that Day, and own their Conversion to his Sacred Writings. And shall all this make no Addition to his Pleasures? The very mention of so absurd a Doctrine refutes and condemns itself.

The Saints at that Day shall, as it were, be brought into a new World, and *he that sits upon the Throne* shall make all things new; and as he crowns his happy Followers with new and unknown Blessings, so shall he receive the Homage of

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of new and unknown Praises. This is a *new Heaven and a new Earth* indeed, beyond all our present Apprehensions, and the magnificent Language of Prophecy shall be fulfilled in its utmost Force and Brightness.

Doubtless there are Pleasures to be enjoy'd by compleat Human Nature, by imbodyed Souls, which a meer separate Spirit is not capable of. Is it not part of the Blessedness of Human Spirits to enjoy mutual Society, and hold a pleasing Correspondence with each other? But whatsoever be the Means and Methods of that Correspondence in a separate State, surely it wants something of that compleat Pleasure and sensible Intimacy, which they shall be made Partakers of, when they shall hold noble Communion in their Bodies raised from the Dust, and refined from every Weakness. Is it not the Happiness of the Saints in Heaven to see their glorify'd Saviour? But even this Sight is and must be incompleat, till they are endued with bodily Organs again. What Converse soever the Spirits of the Just have with the glorify'd Man *Jesus*, while they are absent from the Body, yet I am persuaded 'tis not, nor can it be so full and perfect in all Respects, as it shall be at the general Resurrection. They cannot now see him *Face to Face* in the literal Sense, and they wait for this exalted Pleasure, this immediate and beatifick Sight. *Job* himself yet waits, tho' *the Worms have destroyed his Body*, till that glorious Hour, when *in his Flesh he shall see God*, *Job. xix. 26.* even *God, his Redeemer; who shall stand at the last Day on the Earth*, ver. 25.

Not only all the Saints on Earth, who have received the *First-Fruits of the Spirit*, wait for the Adoption, that is, the Redemption of the Body, *Rom. viii. 23.* but the Saints in Heaven also live there

there, waiting till the Body be redeemed from the Grave, and their Adoption shall appear with illustrious Evidence : Then they shall all look like the Sons of God, like *Jesus*, the First-beloved and the First-born. The Spirits above, how perfect soever they are in the Joys of the separate State, yet wait for those endless Scenes of unknown Delight that shall succeed the Resurrection.

And there is abundant Reason for it, to be drawn from the Word of God ; for the Scripture speaks but very little concerning *the Blessedness of separate Souls*, in comparison of the frequent and large Accounts of the *Glory and Triumph* that shall attend *the Sound of the last Trumpet, and the great Rising-Day*. 'Tis to this blessed Hour that the Apostles in their Writings are always directing the Hope of the Saints. They are ever pointing to this glorious Morning, as the Season when they shall receive their Reward and their Prize, their promised Joy and their Crown ; as tho' all that they had received before in their State of Separation, were hardly to be named in comparison of that *more exceeding and eternal Weight of additional Glory*.

What *new kinds of Sensations* shall entertain us in that Day, what a rich *Variety of Senses* we shall enjoy, what *well-appointed and immortal Organs* we shall be furnished with, instead of our present *feeble Eyes and Ears*, and what *glorious and transporting Objects* shall surround us in those unknown Worlds, and fill the enlarged Powers of the Soul with sensible as well as intellectual Delights : These are Wonders too sublime even for our present Conjecture, and are all reserved in the Counsels of God, to compleat the final Felicity of the Saints.

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Thus we have made it appear, that *the Knowledge and Joy that belongs to the Spirits of the Just made perfect, may admit of large Increase* *.

But can their *Holiness be increased too*? Can *perfect Holiness* receive any *Improvement*?

I will not assert any Thing in this Matter, lest the Manner of Expression should offend weaker Minds: But I desire leave to enquire, Whether those who know most of God, do not love him best? Whether those who have the brightest and fullest Visions of him, are not most transformed into his Image, and made most nearly like to him? Now if the separate Spirits in Heaven are advanced to *different Degrees of Divine Knowledge*, may they not in this Sense have *different Degrees of Holiness* too? Is it not possible that one Saint should love God more intensely than another, and be more impress'd with his Likeness, as he beholds more of his Beauty? Is it not possible that a Soul shall grow in the Strength and Fervour of its Love and Zeal for God, and be more exactly assimilated to him, as it gets nearer to God, and grows up into higher Measures of Acquaintance with him? Has not the Angel *Gabriel*, the Apostle *Paul*, and the glorify'd Human Nature of *Christ* in any respect more of Holiness, or Love, or Likeness to God, than the *meanest Saint* or *Angel* in Heaven? Is not their sublimer Knowledge and Nearness to God attended with proportionable Rays of Divine Sanctity and Glory? Is not the Divine Image in these exalted Saints more compleat than in the very lowest?

And

* There is a little Treatise, called, *The Future State, displaying the Progressive Knowledge of the Blessed in Heaven*, written by a Country Gentleman, publish'd 1683. wherein are many ingenious Thoughts on this Subject.

And yet we may boldly assert, that the meanest Saint or Angel there is so *perfect in Holiness*, as to be *free from all Sin*: There is nothing to be found in any Spirit there, contrary to the Nature or the Will of God. So a Soul released from the Body may perhaps grow in Likeness and Love to God perpetually, and yet it may have no sinful Defects either in its Love or Conformity to God from the first Moment of its Entrance into Heaven.

I shall first illustrate this by two *Similitudes*, and then propose a *rational and clear Account* of it in a way of *Argument*.

When the distant Morning-Sun shines on a piece of polish'd Metal, the Metal reflects the Face of the Sun in Perfection, when the Sun first rises on it. But the same Instruments coming directly under the Meridian Sun-Beams, shall reflect the same Image, brighter and warmer: And yet every moment of this Reflection from the Morning to the highest Noon, shall be perfect, *i. e.* without Spot, without Blemish, and without Defect. Such perhaps is the Holiness of all the Saints in Heaven.

Or shall I rather borrow a *Similitude* from Scripture, and say, the *Holiness* of the Spirits in Heaven is compared to *fine Linen*? Rev. xix. 8. *The fine Linen clean and white is the Righteousness of the Saints*, τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων. Now tho' a Garment may be perfectly clean without the least Spot or Stain, yet *fine Linen* may grow whiter hourly, as it is bleach'd by the constant Influence of the Heavens. So tho' every Spirit be perfectly cleansed and purified from all Sin and Defilement, yet 'tis not impossible that the Degrees of its Grace and Holiness, or Conformity to God, may grow brighter, and much improve by nearer Approaches to God, longer Acquaintance

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tance with him, and the continued Influences of his Majesty and Love.

Now let me propose a *rational Account* of this Matter to the Consideration of those, whose Minds are rais'd above common Prejudices.

The *Holiness of an innocent Creature* consists in attaining the *Knowledge* of the Nature and Will of God, according to the utmost of its own present Capacity, and the Means of Discovery which it enjoys, and in the various Exercises of *Love* to God in an exact Proportion to its Knowledge: or to express it briefly thus, An *innocent Creature* is *perfectly holy*, when it *knows and loves God to the utmost Reach of its present Powers*. If this be done, there's no sinful Defect, no guilty Imperfection; and yet there may be almost an infinite Difference in the various Degrees of Power and Capacity, of Knowledge and Love, amongst innocent Spirits: One Spirit may be formed capable of knowing much more of his Maker than another, and may be favour'd with richer Discoveries. Now if every new divine Discovery raise an equal Proportion of Love in the Soul, then 'tis possible that any Soul might be perfectly holy at its first Entrance into Heaven, and yet may make sublime Advances in Holiness hourly.

Can we suppose that innocent *Adam*, at his very Formation in Paradise, knew all the Wonders of Divine Wisdom and Goodness, that ever he was design'd to attain, had he lived sinless and immortal? And then can we believe since his Knowledge of his Maker's Goodness and Wisdom was to receive continual Advances, that he should admire him no more, and love him no better after a thousand Years Converse with him, than he did at his first Creation? Now the Case of the Saints in Heaven is much the same. The *Rule* and *Measure* of their *Duty* is their *Knowledge*, and the

Rule and Measure of their Knowledge is their own Capacity, and their Means of Discovery. They never fall short of their Duty, and therefore they have no Sin: and thus their Holiness may be every moment perfect, and yet perhaps every moment increasing, as their Capacities are enlarged, and receive new Discoveries, thro' all the Ages of their Immortality.

Happy Souls, whose aspiring Knowledge, and Love, and Zeal, move onward hourly, and get still nigher to their God! Surely while they *behold his Face* in the unveiled Beauties of his Holiness, they shall love him with warmer Zeal, and be more abundantly *satisfied with his Likeness*, Psal. xvii. ult.

After all that I have said on this Subject, some will insist on this Objection, (*viz.*) *Can there be any such thing as Imperfection in Heaven? Is it not said to be a perfect State?* Now if the Spirits above be always growing in Excellency and Holiness, then they are always *defective* and *eternally imperfect*; which is very hard to suppose concerning the Saints in Glory, and contrary to the very Expression and Letter of my Text.

The *Answer* to this is very easy, to all that will give their Reason leave to exercise itself upon *just Ideas*, and to think and argue beyond the *Cbime of Words*.

Perfection (as I told you before) is not to be taken here in an *absolute*, but in a *comparative* Sense: Nothing is absolutely perfect but God; and in comparison of God, the highest and most exalted of all Creatures is, and will be eternally *imperfect* and *defective*: *The Heavens are not pure in his sight, and he charges his Angels with Folly*, Job. iv. 18. Even the Man *Christ Jesus* shall for ever fall short of the Perfection of the Divine Nature to which he is united, and in this Sense will be *imperfect* for ever.

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But where any Creature has attain'd to such exalted Degrees of Excellency as are far superior to what others have attain'd, 'tis the Custom of the Scripture to call them *Perfect*, and that with a Design to do honour to their Character: So *Noah was a just Man, and perfect in his Generation*, Gen. vi. 9. *Job* also has this honour done him, *He was perfect and upright*, Job i. 1. And the Saints on Earth are called *perfect* in many parts of the Word of God, even while they are here on Earth, and have many *Defects and Imperfections*. So tho' it be literally true, that the Saints in Heaven are *continually imperfect* in comparison of *God and Christ*, and of what they themselves shall further attain; yet the Scripture, which delights to do honour to them, chuses rather to call them *perfect*, because of the sublime Degree of Excellencies they possess above their Fellow-Saints on Earth: and 'tis not fit for us to degrade them in our common Language by the diminishing and abasing Names of *Defect* and *Imperfection*, tho' their present Perfection and Excellency admits of everlasting Increase.

If any Man, after he has read this Treatise thus far, and has duly weigh'd all the former *Arguments*, can see Force enough in this last *Objection* to baffle or destroy them all, or can find Terror enough in the meer Sound of the Word *Imperfect* to forbid his Assent; I desire he may not be disturbed in the Possession of his own Sentiments, till the sweet and surprizing Sensations of ever-growing Felicity convince him, that *Heaven is a Place of glorious Improvement*.

This shall suffice for the *Third General Head* of my Discourse, wherein I have shown, that the *Perfection of the Spirits of the Just* is such a Perfection as admits of a rich Variety of Employments and Pleasures, according to the various

Taste and Inclination of the Blessed; it allows of their different Degrees of Felicity, according to their different Capacities and Preparations: it furnishes each blessed Spirit with a frequent Change of Pleasures, and it gives room for perpetual Increase.

S E C T. V.

Of the Means of attaining this Perfection.

MY fourth and last Enquiry is this, *How do these good Spirits of Just Men arrive at this Perfection?*

I answer, *By the Death of the Body, and their Departure from Flesh and Blood.*

You will ask what Reasons are there, why their Departure from the Body should bring them into this perfect State? I will content my self to mention these four.

I. *Because at Death their State of Trial is ended, and the Time of Recompence begins by Divine Appointment:* now all their Imperfections must end with their State of Trial.

This is the Account of Things in the Scripture, *Heb. ix. 27. It is appointed for all Men once to die, and after Death the Judgment.* At the Hour of Death those Words are spoken aloud in the most dreadful or most delightful Language, *Rev. xxii. 11. He that is unjust or filthy, let him be so still: He that is righteous and holy, let him be so still.* And then upon the Determination of the State, the Reward or Recompence

pence follows, ver. 12. *My Reward is with me, to give to every Man according as his Work shall be.*

Many Inconveniencies and Imperfections, and Difficulties, are proper for a State of Trial, and by these Methods we are trained up for Glory. *Christ himself was ignorant of many Things in the Day of his Trial; his Knowledge on Earth was imperfect, and his Joys were so too: for he grew in Wisdom and Knowledge, he was a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief. Tho' he were a Son, yet he learned Obedience by the things that he suffered, and the Captain of our Salvation was made perfect thro' Sufferings, Heb. v. 8. and ii. 10.* But when the time of Probation and Suffering ceases, then Perfection is come, and Glory appears.

Hail, blessed Spirits above, who have pass'd your State of Trial well! You have run the laborious Race under many Burdens, and you have received the Prize. You have fought with mighty Enemies, you have overcome a thousand Difficulties, and you enjoy the Crown. No more shall you complain of the Mixture of Error with your Knowledge, no more shall you groan under the Perplexities of Thought, the Tumults of Passion, the Burdens of in-dwelling Iniquity, nor cry out because of oppressing Enemies or Sorrows. The hour of your Trial is finish'd. You have been sincere and faithful in your imperfect Services, and you are arrived at the World of Perfection.

II. At the Hour of Death *the Spirits of the Just leave all the natural and the sinul Infirmities of Flesh and Blood behind them, which are the Causes and Springs of a thousand Imperfections.*

The very *Natural Circumstances* and *Necessities* of the Body, and the Inconveniencies that attend it in this frail State, do very much embarrass and clog the Spirit in its Pursuit of Knowledge, or Holiness, or Divine Joy.

The Flesh is a dark Covering to the Soul; it beclouds our Ideas, confuses our Conceptions, and prevents a clear and distinct Knowledge of a thousand Objects. 'Tis a dull dark Tabernacle for a Spirit's Residence. It has Windows indeed to let in Light, but those very Windows, like painted or curled Glass, too often discolour the Objects, or distort the Shape of them. These very *Senses* of ours frequently impose upon us in the Searches after Truth, and represent Things not as they are in themselves, and in their own Nature, but as they are useful and hurtful to us; and often we pass a false Judgment on the Nature of Things by their Influence, and are led into many Mistakes in our Enquiries after Knowledge.

Our *Fancy* or *Imagination* raises up false Images of Things, and we forsake the solid and real Truth, to follow the Shapes, and Colours, and Appearances of it painted upon Fancy.

From our very Infancy, our Souls are imposed upon by the Animal; we draw in early many false Judgments, and establish them daily. We are nursed up in *Prejudice* against a hundred Truths both in the *Philosophical*, the *Moral*, and the *Religious* Life; and 'tis the Labour of an Age even for a Wise and Good Man to wear off a few of them, and to judge with any tolerable Freedom, Evidence and Certainty.

A great part of our Life is spent in *Sleep*, wherein the Soul is bound up from exerting any regular Thoughts, confined every Night to a *periodical Delirium*, subjected to all the fluttering
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Tyranny of the Animal Spirits, and dragged away into all the wild Wanderings of dreaming Nature ; and indeed the Thoughts of many of us always, and of all of us sometimes, even when we are awake, are but little better. because we perpetually dance after the Motions of Passion and Fancy, and our Reason seldom judges without them. Alas ! how imperfect is the best of us in Knowledge here !

But *Knowledge* is not the only Good, of which the Body deprives the Spirit. The *Necessities of the Body*, Hunger and Thirst, Weakness and Weariness, and drowsy Spirits, sit very heavy upon the Soul, and hinder it in the Pursuit of *bold and heavenly Thoughts*, break off many a divine Meditation, and interrupt and spoil many a delightful piece of Worship. In Sickness, or in old Age, what long and weighty Troubles, what tiresome Infirmities clog the Soul, and what restless Pains of Nature overwhelm the Spirit, and forbid the lively Exercises of Devotion !

And then also the *sinful Appetites* and *perverse Affections* of Nature are very much seated in Flesh and Blood : So much, that the Apostle in many Places calls the *Principles of Sin* by the general Name of *Flesh*. Read the latter end of the seventh Chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*. How doth he complain of the *Flesh and Members of the Body*, which are fatal Instruments of *Sin and Satan* ! Read the black Catalogue of Iniquities, *Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.* and hear them called *the Works of the Flesh*. Pride, and Malice, and Envy, and Lust, and Covetousness, and Wrath, and Revenge, are found secretly working in *Flesh and Blood*. O how much are the Springs of these sinful Evils seated in the very Composition of depraved Animal Nature ! And how is the poor labouring Spirit of a Saint dreadfully betray'd

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thereby into frequent actual Guilt, even notwithstanding all its Care and Watchfulness! *O wretched Men that we are! who shall deliver us!* Blessed be God, there is a Time of Release.

And as our *Knowledge* and our *Holiness* are rendred very imperfect, by reason of these sensible and corrupt Engines of Flesh and Blood, so are the *Joys and Satisfactions of the Soul* perpetually impaired and diminished hereby. The Heart of the Saint is in pain to feel Sin working in it, and the Conscience complains under the Anguish of Guilt. Blessed be God for the Balm that is found in the Blood of *Christ* to ease the Anguish of Conscience!

Besides, what Spirit can enjoy perfect Peace, while 'tis tied to so many thousand Nerves, each of which may become an Instrument of intense Pain and Torture? And the Body itself has sharp Humours enough in it to corrode those Nerves, and fill the in-dwelling Spirit with Agonies. What Millions of Seeds of painful Disease lurk in Animal Nature, that render this Body a most uncomfortable Dwelling! And how many thousand Strokes and Accidents are we liable to from Abroad, whence new Pains and Sorrows are derived to the Soul! The Wind and the Weather, the Rain and the Hail, and the scorching Sun, the Air, the Water, and Fire, and every Element, may afflict the Animal, and pain the unhappy Spirit.

But O happy Souls, that are free from all the cumbersome and mischievous Influences of Flesh and Blood! from these Instruments of Iniquity, and Springs of deadly Guilt and Torment! Happy Souls, that are released from sick and languishing Bodies, from feeble and burdensome Limbs, and all the tiresome and painful Disorders of dying Nature! that are raised beyond the Reach

Reach and Injury of all these lower Elements, these Mediums of Disease and Pain! Rejoice and triumph, ye Prisoners newly discharged; ye feel the pleasurable Truths that we guess at, but ye feel and enjoy them with a Relish of sublime Pleasure beyond all our Conjectures. Rejoice and exult in your new Liberty, like a Bird released from the imprisoning Cage, and sing with sweetest Notes to the Praise of your Redeemer. O worship and serve him in the full Freedom of all your active Powers; attend at his Feet with intense Delight, and love him *with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory.*

III. By the Death of the Body, and their Release from it, *these Spirits of the Just are free from all the tempting Powers and the sinful Influences of Earth and Hell.*

This World of sensible Allurements, and this World of sinful Men, hath a mighty Influence on the Spirits of the Saints while they dwell in Flesh and Blood. How often are we deceived into Practices of Iniquity by the enticing Vanities of this Life? How often tempted by evil Companions, by flattering Mischiefs and ensnaring Circumstances? And many times too the Fear of Men, and the Terror of their Threatnings, fright us to a Neglect of Duty, or hurry us into the Commission of some active Iniquity. Sometimes the pleasing Enjoyments of Life tie our Hearts to the Creature by the Bands of excessive Love; and sometimes the Injuries and Reproaches we receive from them, kindle our fiery Passions, and rouse up our sinful Wrath and Revenge.

This World also is much under the evil Influences of the *Prince of Darkness*; he is called *the God of this World*: 'Tis greatly given up to the Ravages of the *roaring Lyon*, and he worries the Spirits of the Saints while they dwell within his Territories.

ritories, tho' he is not suffer'd to destroy and devour them.

But at the moment of Death the happy Spirit is released from the *Senses*, and thereby from the *Impressions of all sensible things*. All the flattering Vanities of this lower World have no more Power to entice the Soul, than the grossest Sensualities could entice a pure Angel. Sinful Companions can no more invite, and threatening Tyrants have no more Power to terrify.

The Spirit is then got out of the Territories of *Satan*; he is *Prince of the Power of the Air*, but his Dominion reaches no farther. The Heaven where *Christ* is, never admits him. *Michael* with his *Angels* hath cast out the old Dragon and his *Angels*, and there is no more place found for them there. Happy Spirits, deliver'd and secured from the Devil and the World at once, and from all their tempting and destructive Influences.

Now when a sanctify'd Soul is thus released both from its Union to sinful Flesh and Blood, and from all possible Assaults of the Powers of Earth and Hell, it may be worth our Enquiry, *Whether this Release be not sufficient of itself to render the Work of Sanctification compleat*, and bring it to a State of Perfection, supposing still the ordinary Concurrence or Influence of the sanctifying Spirit? Or whether there must be any immediate, almighty and present Change wrought in the Soul by a new and extraordinary Influence of the Blessed Spirit at the very moment of Death, by which Sanctification is at once compleated. Which of these is true, I know not. I confess this last has generally been the Opinion of our Protestant Writers; and perhaps it may be the Truth: But the Scripture is silent.

Who can tell therefore whether a holy Soul, that hath received the Divine Seed of Grace
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(which is called the *Divine Nature*) and is regenerated, and renewed, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, hath not all its remaining Sins and Imperfections owing to its Bonds of sinful Flesh and Blood? And whether its Compliance with so many Temptations, is not to be attributed to its close Attachments to corrupt animal Nature and sensible things? And therefore whether this sanctify'd Nature would not become compleatly free from Sin, when 'tis freed from all the Influence of a tempting Body and a tempting World? Whether the divine Bent and Bias that is given it by the Spirit of God at first Conversion, and by which it maintains continual Opposition to sinful Flesh, would not make its own way toward Perfection without new and extraordinary Operations? Whether this would not be sufficient to cause the Soul for ever to ascend naturally toward God in Desire, and Love, and Delight, when all Clogs and Embarrassments are removed? So a Vessel filled with upper Air, and dragg'd down by some heavy Weight to the bottom of the Sea, labours and wrestles with the uneasy Burden, and hath a perpetual Tendency toward this upper Region: But if the Weight be once taken off, it immediately of itself rises thro' the Water, and never ceases its Motion till it come to the Surface.

I confess this is a nicer Speculation, and of doubtful Evidence; tho', when St. *Paul* lays his sinful Compliances and Captivity so much to the charge of his *Flesh* and *Members* in the 7th Chapter to the *Romans*, and other Places of his Writings, one would be ready to think St. *Paul* was of this Opinion. However, this we are sure of, that a sanctify'd Soul released from the Body shall be made free from every Sin, and its Absence from Flesh and the World have a large

large, if not a sufficient Influence to effect this Freedom.

And if we should grant it, that a Soul just dismiss'd from this World is not perfectly sanctify'd by the meer Influence of this Release; yet this *Perfection* is sufficiently secured by its Dismissal from Flesh; for when *absent from the Body*, 'tis *present with the Lord*: And this leads me to the next Particular, (*viz.*)

IV. At Death the *Spirits of the Just released from Bodies, enter into another State, a different World, where they have a thousand Advantages for Improvement in Knowledge, and Advances in Holiness and Joy*, vastly beyond what any thing in this World could furnish them with.

They see God, and are for ever with him. They behold him *face to face*, as I have before explain'd it, in a more immediate and intuitive manner; and doubtless such a Sight fills the Spirit with a clearer and brighter Idea of the Nature and Attributes of God, than all the former Lessons it had learnt in the Books of Nature and of Scripture could ever give it.

They see our Lord *Jesus Christ*, our glorify'd Saviour, in such a way and manner as glorify'd separate Spirits can converse with Spirits imbody'd; and one such a View as this will perhaps lead us into more intimate Acquaintance with his human Nature and his united Godhead, than many Years of Converse with him by all the Mediums of Ordinances, those Divine *Glasses* wherein *we see him darkly*, (as the Apostle speaks) and whereby God and *Christ* represent and manifest themselves to Saints on Earth.

And as our *Knowledge* shall receive immense and surprizing Improvements by these new Methods of Discovery, so I think it shall in due proportion advance our *Holiness* or Conformity

to God the Father, and his brightest Image *Christ Jesus*; for we cannot behold them in such a manner without a glorious Transformation into their Likeness, as I have hinted already.

When a Soul, that hath a new Nature given it by sanctifying Grace, is placed in the immediate View and Presence of God the most Holy, it will ever be growing into a greater Degree of Nearness and Love, and it will be powerfully changed more and more into the Likeness of God himself, as a Needle when placed within the Reach of a Loadstone's attractive Power, ceases not its Motion till it be joined in perfect Union, and it self acquires the Virtues of that wonderful Mineral.

Nor is it possible in Heaven that we should advance in *Knowledge and Holiness* without an equal Improvement in *Felicity and Joy*. On Earth indeed we are told, *He that will live godly, shall suffer Persecution*; and *He that increases Knowledge, increases Sorrow*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. and Eccles. i. 18. But as Heaven is high above the Earth, so are the Customs and the Blessings of that State superior to this; for there are no present Sorrows to be known, nor any future to be feared: and Holiness has no Enemy there. All things round the Saint, shall have a Tendency to promote his Blessedness.

The Spirit of a good Man released from the Body, and ascending to Heaven, is surrounded with thousands and ten thousands of blessed Spirits of the *Human* and *Angelick* Order: When it gets within the Confines of the heavenly Country, it sweetly and insensibly acquires the Genius and Temper of the Inhabitants; it breathes, as it were, a new Air, and lives, and thinks, and acts just as they do. It shines and burns with new Degrees of Knowledge, Zeal and Love, and
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exults in the transporting Communications of the same Joy

How vastly shall our Understandings be improved by the kind Narratives and Instructions of the Saints that arrived at Heaven before us, and by Converse with the ministring Angels?

You will say perhaps, that we shall have no need of their teaching when we get to Heaven, for we shall be near to God himself, and receive all immediately from him.

But hath the Scripture any where excluded the Assistance of our Fellow-Spirits? God can teach us here on Earth immediately by his own Spirit, without the Use of Books and Letters, without the Help of Prophets and Ministers, *Men of like Passions with ourselves*; and yet he chuses rather to do it in an instrumental Way, and make his Creatures in the lower World the Means of our Instruction under the superior Influence of his own Spirit: and why may he not use the same Methods to communicate Knowledge to the Spirits that newly arrive at that upper Word?

There we shall see the *Patriarchs* of the Old World, and *Prophets* of the Old Dispensation, as well as the *Apostles* and *Evangelists* of *Christ* and his Gospel. There we shall be conversant with those *Blessed Angels* whom he has used as Ministers of his Vengeance, or his Mercy, to Persons and Churches, Families and Nations: and they will not be unwilling to inform us of those great and surprizing Transactions of God with Men.

There we shall find a Multitude of other *eminent Saints* before and after *Christ*.

Adam doubtless will take a peculiar Pleasure in acquainting all his happy Posterity with the special

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cial Form and Terms of the Covenant of Innocency; he shall tell us the Nature of the Trees of Knowledge and of Life, and how fatally he fell, to the Ruin of his unborn Offspring. Unhappy Father, deriving Iniquity and Death down to his Children! But with what immense Satisfaction and everlasting Surprize he views the second *Adam*, his Son and his Saviour, and stands in Adoration and Transport, while he beholds Millions of his Seed that he once ruined, now raised to superior Glories above the Promises of the Law of Works, by the intervening Influence of a Mediator? *Enoch*, the Man that walked with God, and *Elijah*, the great Reformer, shall instruct us how they were translated to Heaven, and pass'd into a blessed Immortality without calling at the Gates of Death. *Noah* will relate to his Sons among the Blessed, what was the Wickedness of the old World before the Flood, that provoked God their Maker to drown them all; he shall entertain us with the Wonders of the Ark, and the Covenant of the Rainbow in all its glorious Colours. *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful, and the Friend of God, shall talk over again with us his familiar Converse with God and Angels in their frequent Apparitions to him, and shall tell us how much the promised Seed transcends all the poor low Ideas he had of him in his obscure Age of Prophecy. For we cannot suppose that all intimate Converse with our Father *Abraham* shall be forbidden us, by any of the Laws or Manners of that heavenly Country, since Heaven it self is described by our *sitting down* as at one Table with *Abraham*, and *dwelling in his Bosom*, Mat. viii. 11. and Luke xiv. 15. and xvi. 23.

There *Paul* and *Moses* shall join together to give us an account of the *Jewish* Law, and read wondrous

wondrous and entertaining Lectures on the *Types* and Figures of that Oeconomy, and still lead our Thoughts to the glorious *Antitype* with surprizing Encomiums of the Blessed *Jesus*. *Paul* shall unfold to us the dark Places of his own Writings, better than he himself once understood them; and *Moses* shall become an Interpreter of his own Law, who knew so little of the Mystery and Beauty of it on Earth himself.

There we shall acquaint ourselves with some of the *anient Fathers* of the Christian Church, and the *Martyrs*, those dying Champions of the Faith and Honours of the Christian Name. These will recount the various Providences of God to the Church in their several Ages, and show the Visions of St. *John* in the Book of the Revelations, not in the Morning Twilight of Prophecy, but as in the Light of Noon, as a publick History, or as an Evening Rehearsal of the Transactions of the Day. The *Witnesses* themselves shall tell us how they *prophefied in Sackcloth*, and were *slain* by the Man of Sin; how they *rose from the Dead in three Days and a half*, and how the Church was at last reformed from the Popish Mysteries of Iniquity and Superstition. *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, *Calvin* and *Luther*, and the rest of the pious Reformers, shall make known to us the Labours and Sufferings of their Age, and the Wonders of pure Christianity rising as it were out of the Grave, and throwing off the Chains, the Darkness and Defilements of *Antichrist*: And those holy Souls who labour'd in the Reformation of *Great Britain*, while they relate the Transactions of their Day, shall perhaps enquire and wonder why their Successors put a stop to that Blessed Work, and have made no further Progress in a hundred and fifty Years.

Did one of the *Elders* near the Throne give notice to the Apostle *John* concerning the *Martyrs*, Rev. vii. 14. *These are they which came out of great Tribulations, and have washed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb;* and shall we not suppose that the happy Spirits above tell one another their Victories over Sin and Temptation, and the Powers of this World? Shall not the Martyrs who triumphed in their own Blood, and overcame Satan and Antichrist by the Blood of the Lamb, and the Word of their Testimony, shall they not make it known to the Inhabitants of the upper World, and tell it to the Honour of *Christ*, their Captain and their King, how they fought, and died, and conquered? Methinks I hear these noble Historians rehearsing their sacred Tragedy; how they entertain a bright Circle of listening Angels and Fellow-Spirits with their own *Glorious* and *Dreadful* Story, *Dreadful* to suffer, and *Glorious* to relate!

Shall it be *objected* here, that all the glorify'd Saints cannot be supposed to maintain immediate Discourse with those blessed Antients? Can those Antients be imagined to repeat the same Stories perpetually afresh, to entertain every Stranger that is newly arrived at Heaven?

I answer, That since one single Spirit dwelling in Flesh can communicate his Thoughts immediately to five or six thousand Hearers at once by his *Voice*, and to Millions more successively by *Books and Writing*, 'tis very unreasonable to suppose, that Spirits made perfect and glorify'd have not a Power of communicating their Thoughts to many more Thousands by *immediate Converse*: and 'tis past our Reach to conceive what *unknown* Methods may be in use amongst them, to transmit their Ideas and Narratives in a much swifter

swifter Succession, than by *Books and Writings*, thro' all the Courts of Heaven, and to inform all the new Comers, without putting each happy Spirit to the everlasting Labour of a tiresome Repetition.

Tho' every Saint in Heaven should not be admitted to immediate and speedy Converse with these *Spirits of Renown* in past Ages, yet doubtless these glorious Minds have communicated their Narratives, and the Memoirs of their Age, to Thousands of that blessed World already, and from them we may receive a Repetition of the same Wonders with Faithfulness and exact Truth. *History and Chronology* are no precarious and uncertain Sciences in that Country.

It is very probable indeed, that we shall have more intimate Nearness to, and more familiar Communion with those Spirits that were of the same Age and Place with our selves, and of the same Church or Family; for we can more delightfully expatiate in our Converse with them about the same Providences and the same Methods of Grace, and agreeably entertain and improve each other with Notices of the Affairs of the upper and lower Worlds.

Nor must we suppose such sort of historical Converse among the blessed Spirits is meerly design'd to fill the mind with new and strange Ideas. This Pleasure, consider'd by it self, is not sacred enough for the Spirits of the Just made perfect. There is not a Narrative in the World, but shall disclose some wondrous Instances of Divine Wisdom or Mercy, Power or Faithfulness, Patience or Forgiveness, or Wrath and Justice: The Speaker shall feel the Workings of all proper Reverence, Zeal and Love; and every Hearer shall be impress'd with correspondent Affections.

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Affections, and join in Adoration and holy Wonder.

And while we speak of the *Means* and *Advantages* that glorify'd Spirits enjoy for their Improvement in all the parts of their Felicity, surely we may expect the greatest and the best Assistances, even those of the *Holy Spirit*, to render all these Means more effectual. Is he not promised *to abide with us, to be in us, and dwell with us for ever?* John xiv. 16, 17. Is he not represented as dwelling in the Spirits of the Just made perfect, when it is said, *the Spirit that dwelleth in them shall raise their mortal Bodies from the Dead?* Rom. viii. 11. May we not then reasonably infer, That that glorious Spirit, who hath been our Enlightner, our Comforter, and our Sanctifier on Earth, will be our perpetual Enlightner, our eternal Sanctifier, and our everlasting Comforter? He that hath so wonderfully begun the divine Work in us, and laid Foundations of Joy in Knowledge and Holiness, will he not finish and perfect his own Work, and add the Top-stone to crown the heavenly Building?

O blessed State of Spirits discharged from the Prison of Flesh and this World! this wicked World, where *Satan* the *Evil Spirit* has so wide a Range, and so poisonous an Influence, and where *sinful Men* swarm on every side, and bear the largest Sway! What divine Advantages are you possess'd of, for the improvement of all your sacred Excellencies and Joys! When we can raise our Thoughts a little, and survey your Privileges, we feel somewhat of an inward Wish to dwell among you, and send a breathing Meditation, or a Glance of warm Desire towards your World and your Society. We
poor

poor Prisoner-Spirits, (when we hear such Tidings from the Country at which you are arrived, we stretch our Wings a little, and are ready to wish for the Flight. But God our Sovereign must appoint the Hour; he sees that we are not yet refined enough. Keep our Souls, O Father, in this erect Posture, looking, reaching and longing for the Celestial World, till thou hast compleatly prepared us for the promised Glory, and then give us the joyful Word of *Dismission*.

Thus I have endeavoured to make it appear on what accounts a Dismission from the Body is both the *Season when*, and the *Means whereby* the Spirits of the Just arrive at this Perfection. Their State of Trial is ended at Death, and therefore all Inconveniences and Imperfections must cease by divine Appointment: By Death the Soul is released from all the troublesome and tempting Influences of Flesh and Blood; it is delivered from this sinful World, it is got beyond the reach of *Satan* the Tempter and the Tormenter; and it is surrounded with a thousand Advantages for Improvement in Knowledge, Holiness and Joy.

SECT.

S E C T. VI.

Remarks on the foregoing Discourse.

Remark I. **A**RE the Spirits of the Just made perfect at the Death of the Body, then we may be assured that *they neither die nor sleep*; for *Sleep and Death* are both inconsistent with this *State of Perfection* which I have described.

The dead Saints are not lost nor extinct. They are not perished out of God's World, tho' they are gone from ours. They are no more in the World that is enlighten'd by the Sun and Moon, and the glimmering Stars; but they themselves shine gloriously, like Stars of different Magnitude; in the World where *there is no Sun, nor is there any need of the Moon to shine in it, for the Glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the everlasting Light thereof*; Rev. xxi. 23. They are lost from Earth, but they are found in Heaven. They are dead to us at present, but they are alive to God their Father, and to Jesus their Saviour; they are alive to the holy Angels, and to all their Fellow-Saints in that upper World.

If there had been any such thing as a *Soul sleeping or dying*, our Saviour would never have argued thus with the *Saducees*, Luke xx. 37, 38. nor have proved the *Doctrine of the Resurrection* from the *Doctrine of the separate State of Souls*: 'Tis as if he had said, *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are dead*

dead long ago; but God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob still. Now God is not the God of the Dead, but the God of the Living; therefore the Souls of those Patriarchs are yet alive, for they all live to God in the separate State, and they shall appear in their compleat human Nature, Soul and Body, at the Resurrection. This is the Language and the Force of our Saviour's Argument, and therefore I must believe the Soul of Abraham is alive now.

When Jesus promises the penitent Thief upon the Cross, *Luke xxiii. 43. This Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*; can we persuade ourselves that he intended no more than that the Thief should be with him in the Grave, or in a State of Indolence and Insensibility? Does he not assure him in these Words, that there is a State of Happiness for Spirits dismissed from the Body, whither the Soul of our Lord Jesus was going, and where the dying Penitent should find him?

So when the Infidel Jews stoned Stephen the first Martyr, *Acts vii. 59.* while he express'd his Faith and Hope in these Words, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit*; was this Spirit of his to be laid asleep till the Resurrection? Can we suppose the dying Saint would have made such a Request upon so lethargick a Principle, and in the View of such a stupid State? No, surely; for he expected, and desired, and prayed to be received to dwell where Christ is, and to behold that Glory which he had a Glimpse of in the Agonies of Death.

Would the Apostle Paul have been so willing to be absent from the Body, where he did much Service for his Saviour, if he had not a joyful View of being present with the Lord? as he ex-

presses it, 2 *Cor.* v. 8. What doth he mean by this blessed Language of *Presence with the Lord*, if his Soul was to lie asleep in a senseless and unactive State till the second Coming of *Jesus*? Or would he have told the *Philippians*, Chap. i. ver. 23. that he had a *Desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better*, if he had hoped for no Advantage for his Spirit by it, but a meer stupid Indolence and rest in the silent Grave?

Besides, we are told of *rebellious Spirits that are in Prison*, 1 *Pet.* iii. 19. 20. and of *Sodom and Gomorrah suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire*, Jude ver. 7. Whether this be *material Fire*, or merely a Metaphor to express *Torment*, is not necessary to enquire here: But surely we can never imagine that the Justice of God has provided the Prison of Hell and fiery Torments for the Souls of the Wicked, separate from Bodies, and yet that the Mercy and Goodness of God has provided no Heaven of Happiness for the Spirits of those that have loved, honoured and obeyed him all the Days they dwelt in the Flesh. There is then, there is certainly a State of Happiness prepared for holy Souls immediately after Death.

When we think of our *Pious Friends departed*, our foolish Imagination is too ready to indulge and improve our Sorrow. We sit solitary in the Parlour and the Chamber, we miss them there, and we cry, "*They are lost.*" We retire melancholy to the Closet, and bewail a lost Father, or lost Mother, or perhaps a nearer and dearer Relative. We miss them in our daily Conversation, we miss them in all their friendly Offices, and their endearing sensible Characters, and we are ready to say again, "*Alas! they are lost.*" This is the Language of Flesh and Blood, of Sense and Fancy. Come let our Faith teach us to think
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and speak of them under a more chearful and a juster Representation: They are not utterly lost, for they are *present with Christ and with God*. They are departed our World, where all things are imperfect, to those upper Regions where Light and Perfection dwell. They have left their Offices and Stations here among us, but they are employ'd in a far diviner manner, and have new Stations and nobler Offices on high. Their *Places* on Earth indeed *know them no more*, but their *Places* in Heaven know them well, even those glorious Mansions that were *prepared for them from the Foundation of the World*. Their Place is empty in the *earthly Sanctuary*, and in the *Days of solemn Assembly*, but they appear above in the *heavenly Jerusalem* as fair Pillars and Ornaments in the Temple of God on high, and shall for ever dwell with him there.

'Tis a very natural *Enquiry* now, But *where are these Places of blessed Spirits? What part of the Creation is it, in which they have their Residence?* Is it above or below the Sun? Is their Habitation in any of the Planetary or Starry Worlds? Or are they fled beyond them all? Where is the proper Place of their Presence?

Let me propose a brief *Answer* to these curious *Questions* in a few Propositions.

1. The chief Properties of Spirits are *Knowledge* and *Activity*; and they are said to be *present* there, where they have an immediate *Perception* of any thing, and where they lay out their immediate *Activity* or Influence. So our Souls are said to be *present* with our Bodies, because they have immediate *Consciousness* or *Knowledge* of what relates to the Body, and they *move it*, and *act* upon it, or *Influence* it, in an immediate manner.

2. God,

2. God, the *infinite Spirit*, has an *immediate and universal Presence*; that is, he is immediately conscious of, and acquainted with every thing that passes in all the known and unknown parts of the Creation, and by his preserving and governing Power manages all things. Wheresoever he displays his *Glory* to separate Spirits, that is *Heaven*; and where he exerts his *Vengeance*, that is *Hell*.

3. *Finite Spirits* have not such an *immediate and universal Presence*. Their Knowledge and their Activity are confined to certain Parts of the Creation: And wheresoever they are, if they are under the immediate Influences of *Divine Glory*, they are in *Heaven*; if of his *Vengeance*, they are in *Hell*.

4. They are usually represented as having *some Relation to a particular Place or Places*; because while we dwell in *Flesh and Blood*, we know not how to conceive of their Presence so well any other way: and therefore they may be described in Scripture or in common Discourse, as *being in Heaven*, and *above the Heavens*, and *in the third Heaven*, and as *coming down to Earth*, &c. according as they are supposed to put forth any Actions there, or to have an immediate Cognizance of things that are done in those Places: for the chief Notion we have of the *Presence* of Spirits, is their *immediate Consciousness*, and their *immediate Agency*.

5. But if they are provided with any *subtile ethereal Bodies* (which are called *Vehicles*) in and by which they act as soon as they leave *Flesh and Blood*, then they may properly be said to *reside in those Places where their Vehicles are*, even as our *Souls* at present are said to be in a Room, or a Closet, or a Field, because our *Bodies* are there, in and by which they act.

6. There must be some Place where the glorified Body of *Christ* is, and the Souls of departed Saints are, in some sense, with him. There *Enoch* and *Elijah* are in their immortal Bodies, and *other Saints* who rose at the Resurrection of *Christ*. They may be (for ought we know) in or among some of the Planets, or amongst the Stars; tho' the Distance of the Stars is so prodigious and amazing, according to the exactest Calculations of the new Philosophy, that if the Motion of a Spirit or glorified Body were no swifter than that of a Cannon-Bullet, they would not get so far as the Stars in a thousand Ages; nor would the Journey of so swift a Traveller to any of the Planets (except the *Moon*) cost less than the Labour of several Years.

7. These things are so puzzling to our Reason, so confound our Imagination, and so far transcend the Reach of our present Faculties to enquire and determine, that 'tis sufficient for us to know and believe, that the *Spirits of the Just made perfect have an Existence under the blissful Influences of the Grace and Glory of God*. And tho' we freely speak of them, and the Scripture leads us to conceive of them, as dwelling in a World of Light, and in some special Place of Magnificence and Apartments of Glory, or as moving from one Place to another; yet perhaps it is to be understood chiefly in condescension to the Weakness of our present Capacities, or in relation to *Vehicles* to which they may be united. But our Ignorance in these Matters shall be no hindrance to our Arrival at Heaven, if we tread the Paths of Faith and Holiness, tho' we know not in what part of the Creation it lies.

I proceed to the *second Remark*.

Remark II.

Remark II. If all the Spirits of the Just that depart from this World are made perfect, then *there is much better company above than there is below.* The Society in Heaven is much more agreeable than the best Society on Earth.

Here we meet with a multitude of Sinners; they are ready to mingle in all the Affairs of Life, and sometimes Hypocrites join with us in the sacred Ordinances of the Sanctuary. The Apostle himself hath told us, that in the civil Concerns of this Life we cannot avoid them; for if we will keep no Company with Sinners, we must have nothing to do in this World, *we must needs go out of it*, 1 Cor. v. 10. But in the World above there are nothing but Saints; no Inhabitant there but what is holy. There are no Persons there that will tempt or defile us, or lead us astray from the Paths of Purity or Peace. *Holiness to the Lord* is inscribed on every Soul there; nor is there *one Canaanite* in that upper House of the Lord of Hosts; Zech. xiv. 21.

But this is not all. For there are many of the Saints themselves here on Earth that make but *very indifferent Companions*. Some of them are shamefully ignorant, imprudent and foolish; and we have much ado to bear with their Folly. Some of them are morose and contentious, captious and peevish envious and censorious, and ready to take Offence on the slightest Occasions; a Look or a Smile placed wrong shall disoblige them, a mistaken Word shall affront them for a Month, and 'tis very hard work to humour and please them: or we ourselves perhaps are foolish and imprudent, we are peevish and resenting, and our Fellow-Christians have as much to do to bear with us or to please us. There are some Persons, concerning whom we have reason to hope, that their Hearts in the

main are right with God, but either by the Iniquity of their animal Natures, or the Power of their Temptations, they look so like the Men of this World, that 'tis hard to distinguish them, and their Society is dangerous, or at least very unprofitable and undesirable. Some of us fall into gross Mistakes, and lead our Friends into Error, and hand in hand we forsake the Truth. Some of us are melancholy, and sit in Darkness; then we spread a Gloom and Heaviness over all our Conversation, and banish all the Joys of Earth and Heaven: or at best (it may be) and in our sprightly Days, we fill up the visiting Hour with Trifles and Impertinencies, and there is little of heavenly and divine Conversation among us. Poor low groveling Subjects furnish our Tongues, and entertain our Ears, because we are so very imperfect here on Earth in Knowledge, in Holiness, or in divine Joy.

But what a glorious Difference is there in the *Society above*, where we may be secure from all Mistake and Falshood, from all Impertinence and Folly in the longest Discourse or Conference! for every Spirit there is so perfect in Knowledge, as to be free from Error, and has so divine a Turn of Mind, that nothing relishes but what is holy and heavenly. No Quarrels, no Complaints are found there to imbitter our Converse, to diminish the Pleasure of Society, or to draw the Heart away from God.

If we would know *what the Society of Heaven is*, let us renew the Memory of the wisest and holiest, the kindest and the best Companions that we were ever acquainted with here on Earth; let us recollect the most pleasing Hours that we ever enjoy'd in their Society; let us divest them of all their Mistakes and Weaknesses, of all their
Sins

Sins and Imperfections; and then by Faith and Hope let us divest ourselves of all our own Guilt and Follies too: let us fancy ourselves engaged with them in delightful Discourse on the most divine and most affecting Subjects, and our Hearts mutually raising each other near to God, and communicating mutual Joys. This is the *State of the Blessed*, this the Conversation of Heaven, this and more than this shall be our Entertainment when we arrive at those happy Regions.

This Thought would very naturally lead me to the mention of our *Honoured and departed Friend*, but I withhold myself a little, and must detain your Expectation till I have made a *Remark* or two more.

Remark III. Are the Spirits of the Just, who are departed from Earth, made perfect in *Heaven*; then *they are not the proper Subjects for our perpetual Sorrows and endless Complaints*. Let us moderate our Grief therefore, for that very Providence that has fix'd them in perfect Holiness and Joy.

We lament their Absence, and our Loss indeed is great; but the Spirit of *Christian Friendship* should teach us to rejoice in their Exaltation. Is it no pleasure to think of them as released from all the Bonds of infirm Nature, from the Pains of Mortality, and the Disquietudes of a sinful World? Is it not better to lift our Eyes upward, and view a Parent or a beloved Friend adorned with perfect Grace and compleat in Glory, exulting in the Fulness of Joy near the Throne of God, than to behold him labouring under the tiresome Disorders of old Age, groaning under the Anguish and Torment of acute Distempers, and striving with the troublesome

Attendants of this sinful and painful State? Do we profess Fondness and Affection for those that are gone, and shall we not please ourselves a little in their Happiness, or at least abate our Mourning? Doth not St. Paul tell the *Corinthians*, *This is what we wish, even your Perfection?* 2 Cor. xiii. 9. and should not Saints, in the lower World, take some Satisfaction, when a Fellow-Saint is arrived at the Sum of his own Wishes, even perfect Holiness and Joy on high?

But I correct myself here; *Nature* must have its way, and be indulged a little; let it express its sensible Pain at the Loss of such Indearments. A long Separation from those who are so near a-kin to us in Flesh and Blood, will touch the Heart in a painful Place, and awaken the tenderest Springs of Sorrow. The Sluices must be allowed to be held open a little; *Nature* seems to demand it as a Debt to *Love* and *Grace* does not utterly forbid it; When *Lazarus* died, *Jesus* groaned and wept, *John* xi. 33. 35.

Yet let not *Sorrow* triumph and reign, and, like a Flood, break over all its Bounds; rather give the Stream of it a little Diversion into a better Channel. Come, let us take the Advice which our Blessed Saviour gives to the *Daughters of Jerusalem*, who attended him to his Cross with Tears: *Luke* xxiii. 28. *Weep not for me, but if ye must weep, do it for yourselves and your Children*; because you are still left in the *Valley of Sin* and *Sorrow*, while the Saints departed are arrived at the Land of Peace, and their Feet stand upon the Mountains of *Paradise*.

Could the Voice of those Blessed Spirits made perfect reach our Ears, we should hear them speak in the Language of their Lord, "*Weep not for us, but for yourselves*; you are still encompassed

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“ with Temptations and Difficulties, we have
“ surmounted them all : You are wrestling with
“ many Errors, and intangled in dark and noisy
“ Controversies ; we are perfect in Knowledge,
“ and see Divine Mysteries in a Divine Light :
“ You are labouring in the Race ; we are crown-
“ ed, and have received the Prize : You are still
“ striving in the Field of Battle, and we well re-
“ member the toilsome and painful Conflict ; we
“ pity you, and call you rather to weep for your-
“ selves than for us ; we have finished all the
“ War thro’ Divine Grace, and are secure in the
“ City of Triumph : You are yet travelling thro’
“ the Valley of Tears, we are refreshing our-
“ selves in the Gardens of Pleasure, and on Hills
“ of everlasting Gladness. Hold on with Cou-
“ rage, and Faith, and Patience ; there are Man-
“ sions of Joy prepared for you also, and we wait
“ your happy Arrival.

Remark IV. Are the Spirits of just Men in Heaven made perfect, in the same Excellencies and Privileges which they possess’d on Earth ? then if our Curiosity, or our Love, has a mind to know what are the Circumstances of our pious Friends departed, or how they are employ’d above, let us review what they were here below, and how they employed themselves when they were with us ; for, as I told you, in this Life, we are trained up for the Life of Glory : We shall then be advanced to a glorious and transcendent Degree of the same Graces ; and there will be something in the future State of Rewards answerable and correspondent to the present State of Labour and Tryal.

This Thought necessarily calls our Meditations backward a little, to take a short Survey of some peculiar Characters of our excellent

Friend departed, that we may learn to rejoice in the present Perfection of his Graces and Glories.

S E C T. VII.

The Character of the Deceased.

WH E N I name Sir JOHN HARTOPP, all that knew him will agree that I name a *Gentleman, a Scholar, and a Christian*: and neither of these Characters, in the best and most valuable Sense of them, could forsake him at his Entrance into Heaven.

He shone with Eminence among the *Persons of Birth and Title* * on Earth; while his *obliging Deportment and his affable Temper* render'd him easy of Access to all his Inferiors, and made him the Delight of all his Friends. Tho' he knew what was due to his Quality in this World, yet he affected none of the *Grandeurs of Life*, but daily practis'd *Condescension and Love*, and secured the Respect of all, without assuming a superior Air.

Then surely he carried this Temper with him to the upper World, where Gentleness and Goodness reign in the highest Perfection; and doubtless he practises now all the same Graces of Conversation among the blessed Spirits there, but in a far superior

* His Grandfather, Sir Edward Hartopp, was created a Baronet, by K. James I. 1619. which was but a few Years after the first Institution of that Order.

rior manner, according to the unknown Laws and Customs of that Region of Light and Love.

He had a *Taste for universal Learning*; and ingenious Arts were his Delight from his Youth. He pursued Knowledge in various Forms, and was acquainted with many parts of Human Science. *Mathematical Speculations and Practices* were a favourite Study with him in his younger Years; and even to his old Age, he maintain'd his Acquaintance with the Motions of the heavenly Bodies, and Light and Shade whereby Time is measured.

And may we not suppose that there are Entertainments amongst the Works of God on high to feast the Spirits of such a Genius? May they not in that upper Region look down and survey the various Contrivances of Divine Wisdom, which created all things in these lower Worlds in Number, Weight and Measure? May not our exalted Friend give Glory there to his Maker, in the Contemplation of the same heavenly Bodies, tho' he dwells in the Region where Night and Shadows are never known, and above the Need or Use of Sun-Beams?

But the *Book of God* was his chief Study, and his divinest Delight. His Bible lay before him Night and Day; and he was well acquainted with the Writers that explain'd it best. He was desirous of seeing what the Spirit of God said to Men in the Original Languages. For this end, he commenced some Acquaintance with *Hebrew* when he was more than fifty Years old; And that he might be capable of judging of the true Sense of any Text in the New Testament, he kept his youthful Knowledge of the *Greek Language* in some measure even to the Period of his Life.

But earthly Languages are of little Use in Heaven. There are too many Defects and Ambiguities in them to express the bright, the compleat, and the distinct Ideas of separate Spirits. We may allow our learned Friend therefore to be divested of these when he dropt Mortality. Now he is out of the Body, and caught up to dwell in Paradise, where St. Paul made heretofore a short Visit, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. he hears and he speaks those unspeakable Words, 'tis not possible for a Mortal Tongue to utter. The Things of Heaven are not to be express'd in any foreign Language.

Among the various Themes of Christian Contemplation, he took peculiar Pleasure in the Doctrines of Grace, in the Display of the Glories of the Person of Christ, God in our Nature, and the wondrous Work of Redemption by his Cross. He adored him as his Lord and his God: And while he trusted in his Righteousness as the great Mediator, and beheld him as his crucified Saviour, he was ever zealous to maintain the Honours due to his Divine Nature and Majesty.

And we may be sure this is a Study in which he is still engaged, and he spends the Days of his Eternity in the pleasurable Contemplations of his glorified Redeemer, and the sacred Mysteries of his Cross, and his Throne, which things the Angels desire to pry into.

His Practice in Life was agreeable to his Christian Principles, for he knew that the Grace of God, that brings Salvation to Men, teaches them to deny all Ungodliness, and to live sober, righteous and religious Lives, that in all things they may adorn the Doctrine of God their Saviour.

Now that this part of his Character is continued and exalted in the Region of the blessed Spirits, is too evident to need any Amplification or Proof;

Proof; for Holiness in every part of it is made perfect there, and all under the sweet Constraint of Love.

His Conversation was Pious and Learned, Ingenious and Instructive: He was *inquisitive into the Affairs of the Learned World, the Progress of Arts and Sciences, the Concerns of the Nation, and the Interest of the Church of Christ*: And upon all Occasions was as ready to communicate as he was to enquire. What he knew of the things of God or Man, he resolved not to know them only for himself, but for the Benefit of all that had the Honour of his Acquaintance. There are many of his Friends that will join with me to confess, how often we have departed from his Company refresh'd and advanced in some useful Knowledge. And I cannot but reckon it among the Blessings of Heaven, when I review those five Years of Pleasure and Improvement, which I spent in his Family in my younger part of Life; and I found much *Instruction* myself, where I was call'd to be an *Instructor*.

Nor can I think such Enquiries and such Communications as are suitable to the Affairs of the upper World, are unpractised among the Spirits of just Men made perfect there; for Man is a sociable Creature, and enjoys Communion with his Fellow-Saints there, as well as with his Maker and his Saviour. Nor can the Spirit of our honoured and departed Friend be a Stranger to the Pleasures of Society amongst his Fellow-Spirits in those blessed Mansions.

His Zeal for the Welfare of his Country, and of the Church of Christ in it, carried him out to the most expensive and toilsome Services in his younger and his middle Age. He employed his Time, his Spirits, his Interest, and his Riches for the Defence

fence of this poor Nation, when forty Years ago it was in the utmost danger of Popery and Ruin *.

And doubtless the Spirits of the Just in Heaven are not utterly unacquainted with the Affairs of the Kingdom of Christ on Earth. He rejoices and will rejoice among his Fellow-Saints, when happy Tidings of the Militant Church, or of the Religious Interests of Great Britain, are brought to the upper World by ministring Angels. He waits there for the full Accomplishment of all the Promises of Christ to his Church, when it shall be freed from Sins and Sorrows, from Persecutions and all Mixtures of Superstition, and shall be presented to the Father a glorious Church without Spot or wrinkle, in perfect Beauty and Joy.

His Doors were ever open, and his Carriage always friendly and courteous to the Ministers of the Gospel, tho' they were distinguished among themselves by Names of different Parties; for he loved all that loved our Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity.

He chose indeed to bear a Part in constant publick Worship with the Protestant Dissenters, for he thought their Practice more agreeable to the Rules of the Gospel: He join'd himself in Communion with one of their Churches, which was under the Pastoral Care of the Reverend Dr.

John

* He was three times chosen Representative in Parliament for his County of Leicestershire, in those Years when a sacred Zeal for Liberty and Religion strove hard to bring in the Bill of Exclusion, to prevent the Duke of York (afterwards K. James II.) from inheriting the Crown of England.

John Owen, where he continued an honourable Member under successive Pastors till the Day of his Death. Nor was he ashamed to own and support that despised Interest, nor to frequent those Assemblies, when the Spirit of Persecution raged highest in the Days of King *Charles* and King *James* the Second. He was a present Refuge for the Oppressed, and the special Providence of God secured him and his Friends from the Fury of the Oppressor. He was always a devout and diligent Attendant on Publick Ordinances till these last Years of his Life, when the Infirmities of Age growing upon him, confined him to his private Retirements.

But if Age confined him, Death gave him a Release. He is exalted now to the Church in Heaven, and has taken his Place in that glorious Assembly, where he worships among them before the Throne : There he has no need to relieve his Memory by the Swiftness of his Pen, which was his perpetual Practice in the Church on Earth, and by which means he often entertain'd his Family in the Evening Worship on the Lord's Day with excellent Discourses ; some of which he copied from the Lips of some of the greatest Preachers of the last Age: There his unbodied Spirit is able to sustain the sublimest Raptures of Devotion, which run thro' the Worshipers in that heavenly State ; tho' here on Earth I have sometimes seen the pious Pleasure too strong for him : and while he has been reading the Things of God to his Household, the Devotion of his Heart has broken thro' his Eyes, has interrupted his Voice, and commanded a sacred Pause and Silence.

He enjoy'd an intimate Friendship with that Great and Venerable Man *Dr. Owen*, and this was mutually

mutually cultivated with Zeal and Delight on both sides, till Death divided them. The World has already been acquainted, that 'tis to the pious Industry of Sir *John Hartopp*, that we are indebted for many of those Sermons and Discourses of the *Doctor*, which have been lately publish'd in *Folio*. A long and familiar Acquaintance enabled him also to furnish many Memoirs, or Matters of Fact, toward that brief Account of the *Doctor's* Life, which is prefixed to that Volume, tho' it was drawn up in the present Form, with various Enlargements, by another Hand.

Now can we suppose two such Souls to have been so happily intimate on Earth, and may we not imagine they have found each other among the brighter Spirits on high? May we not indulge ourselves to believe, that our late honoured Friend hath been congratulated upon his Arrival by that Holy Man that assisted to direct and lead him thither?

Nor is it improbable that he has found other Happy Souls there, who were number'd among his Pious Acquaintance on Earth. Shall I mention that excellent Man Sir *Thomas Abney*, who was his late Forerunner to Heaven, and had not finish'd two Months there before Sir *John Hartopp's* Arrival? Happy Spirits! May I congratulate your Meeting in the celestial Regions! But the World and the Churches mourn your Absence; and the Protestant Dissenters lament the Loss of two of their fairest Ornaments and Honours.

And is there not the same Reason to believe, that our departed Friend hath by this time renewed his sacred Endearments with those Kindred Spirits, that were once related to him in some of the Nearest

Nearest Bonds of Flesh and Blood? There they rejoice together in unknown Satisfaction, they wait and long for the Arrival of those whom they left behind, and for whose immortal Welfare they had a solicitous Concern in the State of their Mortality.

This Thought opens my way to address the Posterity, the Kindred, and the Friends of the Deceased, in the *fifth Remark.*

S E C T. VIII.

An Address to the Friends and Relatives of the Deceased.

Remark V. IF the Perfection of blessed Spirits above consists in a glorious Increase of those Virtues and Graces which were begun below, let us see to it then, that those Graces and those Virtues are begun in us here, or they will never be perfected in us hereafter. If our Spirits have nothing of that Divine Righteousness wrought in them on Earth, we can never be admitted into the Company of the Spirits of the Righteous made perfect in Heaven.

'Tis an old Saying among Divines, but 'tis a most rational and a certain Truth, that *Grace is Glory begun, and Glory is but Grace perfected.* The Saints above have the same Divine Nature, the same sanctify'd Inclinations, and are engag'd in many of the same sacred Employments with the Saints below, but all in a superior Degree; and in a more transcendent Manner.

As for you, *my Friends*, who have the Happiness and Honour to be *descended from such Parents*, or to be nearly *related to such Saints*, you have seen the Virtues and Graces, the exemplary Character and Piety of them who are gone before: you have had many bright and shining Examples in your Family; you are the *Children of the Blessed of the Lord*, and may you for ever *be blessed with them!* and in order to it, see that you are made like them now, that ye *may be Followers of them, who thro' Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.*

This is a proper Season to examine yourselves, and call your Souls to account in such Language as this: My Father, my Mother, my honoured and superior Kindred are gone to Glory: Their Graces are perfected; and are not mine begun? What, have I no Evidences for Heaven yet ready? no Exercises of Faith, of Love, of Repentance, of true Holiness? Are they arrived at Heaven, and am I not yet travelling in the same Road?

They were convinced of Sin, and the Danger of eternal Death, so as to give themselves no Rest till they found Salvation. Have I ever been convinced of the Sin of my Nature, and the Guilt of my Life? Have I beheld my self expos'd to the Anger of God, and in danger of everlasting Misery, so as to cry out with myself, *What shall I do to be saved?*

They have seen *Jesus* the Son of God, the All-sufficient Saviour, and have committed their Souls by humble Faith into his Hands, to obtain Pardon for the sake of his Attonement, to be justify'd thro' his Righteousness, to be renew'd and made holy by the Grace of his Spirit, and to be preserved to eternal Glory. Now what have

I see of the Excellency, or All-sufficiency, or Necessity of *Christ* as a Mediator? Have I been persuaded to trust in him for my Acceptance with God, to give my Soul up to him as my Guide, Guard and Ruler, to be form'd after his Image, and to venture all my immortal Concerns with him to be brought safe to Heaven? Have I ever received him as my Lord and my Saviour, under those condescending Characters and Offices which he sustains for a Sinner's Salvation?

They have believed in him while he was unseen, and they loved him, tho' they saw him not; they rejoiced in him as their *All*, and they knew not how to live without him. How is it with my Soul in this respect? Do I love *Jesus* the Lord? Is he the Desire of my Heart, and the Delight of my Life?

Tho' they were kept by the Grace of God from the Pollutions of the World, and upheld their unblemish'd Character to the last, yet they found Sin to be their most dangerous Enemy; they have felt it bitter and painful to their Souls, and they long groan'd under it as their daily Burden. What is my Grief? what my chief Sorrow? Do I groan *in this Tabernacle being burdened*, because of this inward Enemy? And do I long to be rid of it? Are my sinful Affections like a Pain at my Heart, and do the Workings of Sin within me awaken my continual Repentance?

They maintain'd a sacred Tenderness of Conscience, and were afraid to indulge themselves in that Company, in that Practice, and in those Liberties of Life which have often proved a dangerous Share to Souls. Now can I appeal to God, who sees my Heart, that I am cautious and watchful

watchful against every Snare, that I stand afar off from every Temptation, and abstain from all Appearance of Evil?

They took sweet Pleasure in Retirement, in Prayer and other Holy Exercises: This was the Refreshment of their Hearts, and the Throne of Grace was their Refuge under every Distress and Difficulty. Let me ask my Heart, What is my Pleasure, my inward Delight? Do I find a sweet Relish in Devotion? And when outward Troubles perplex me, do I make the Mercy-Seat my speedy and constant Refuge?

They lived upon their Bible, they counted the Gospel their Treasure, and the Promises and the Words of God written there, were more valuable to them than all their outward Riches. But what is my Life? what is my Treasure? what is my Hope? Do I count Heaven and the Gospel my chief Inheritance? Do I converse much with my Bible, and find Food and Support there? Do I look at things unseen and eternal, and feed and rest upon the promised Glories of another World, when I meet with Disappointments here?

They had a large share of Christian Experiences, a rich Stock of Divine and Spiritual Observations by much Converse with God, and with their own Souls. What have I got of this kind for the Support of my Soul? or are all these strange things to me?

Believe me, *My Dear and Honour'd Friends*, these are Matters of infinite Importance; I am sure you will think so one Day: and I trust and persuade my self, you think them so now. I cannot give myself leave to imagine that you put these Thoughts far from you. Some of you have made it appear that they lie next your Heart,
and

and that your Souls are deeply engaged in the Ways of God and Goodness. O that every one of you would give the same Comfort and Joy to your Friends! Be not satisfied with a meer Negative Holiness, an unspotted Character in the Eyes of the World; but let the World know that you dare be religious, and profess universal Piety in a degenerate Age. Let those that honour the Memory of your Parents, and love your Souls, rejoice in your publick Christianity. Let them know, that there are the Foundations of heavenly Glory laid within you all, and the blessed Work begun on Earth, that shall surely be made perfect among the *Spirits of the Just in Heaven.*

And methinks I would not have you contented with the lowest Seat there; but stir up yourselves to a most unwearied Pursuit of Holiness in the sublimer Degrees of it. And thus labouring in the Christian Race, contend for some of the brighter Prizes, some of the richer Crowns of Glory. Be not satisfy'd to sit at a great distance below your Parents departed, even in the heavenly Country: but strive with a holy Ambition that you may come near them, that the whole Family together may arrive at some superior Degrees of Blessedness. And O may Divine Grace grant me the Pleasure to be a Witness to your exalted Stations, and to worship and rejoice amongst you there! *Amen.*

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